GLEAMS of MEMORY

JAMES PAYN

1826

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GLEAMS OF MEMORY

WITH SOME REFLECTIONS

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BY

JAMES PAYN

AUTHOR OF 'LOST SIR MASSINGBERD' 'BY PROXY' ETC.

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TO

GEORGE SMITH

THESE 'GLEAMS' ARE DEDICATED

IN MEMORY OF

'TWENTY YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP'

GLEAMS OF MEMORY

WITH SOME REFLECTIONS[1]

CHAPTER I

One of the many regrets which, in common no doubt with many of my contemporaries, I feel as my life draws to its close, is that I have kept no record of the various scenes I have witnessed, the pleasant people I have met, or even of the dates at which those experiences of my life that would have more or less interest for the world at large, have taken place. I have met a great many persons, as the phrase goes, 'worth knowing,' heard very excellent stories, been regaled with a great deal of wit, but have only a confused recollection, such as

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one has after a prolonged banquet, of the good things that have been set before me. In attempting to recall them I have also an additional difficulty in not feeling quite certain whether at some time or other I have not already woven them into some essay or story, since I have written very much, and made what is called 'copy' of a good many incidents and characters, in speaking of which I may be telling an old story without being aware of it. There is nothing of our own—not even the button at the back of our shirt-collar—so treacherous as our memory. An old writer tells us that 'good wit never agrees with a good memory. A moist brain full of spirits and apt for invention does not long retain impressions.' This is comforting to a certain extent, but I wish my recollections were more vivid. As to dates, I never had the power of recalling one. Even that of my own birthday I only remember because my family give me presents upon that day, but as to when their birthdays happen (and it becomes *my* turn to give *them* presents) my mind is a blank.

I was born at the very end of the little month' as it is affectionately called, but easily escaping, for it was not a Leap Year, the disadvantage of getting only a fourth of the presents aforesaid. When I read in autobiographies how accurately my fellow-creatures remember the incidents of their childhood, I feel humiliated and abashed, for I remember scarcely anything of that period. I recollect, however, when I was a very tiny boy, my mother complaining to the gardener that we had no grapes in the greenhouse. 'How is it that Mr. Brown and Mrs. Jones have such fine grapes they tell me, and we have none?' 'Well, I tell you how it is, ma'am,' he replied, 'they lies,' and I think this must sometimes be the case with the autobiographists when narrating their early impressions.

The associations of my childhood are mostly with the night time, during which I suffered horribly; whether it was cowardice or imagination, the effect of the dark with its loneliness upon me was appalling. Many a man will sympathise with that

graphic picture Mr. R. L. Stevenson has drawn of a child going up to bed—

> Now my little heart goes beating like a drum,
> With the breath of the Bogie in my hair;
> And all round the candle the crooked shadows come,
> And go marching along up the stair;
> The shadow of the balusters, the shadow of the lamp,
> The shadow of the child that goes to bed—
> All the wicked shadows coming tramp, tramp, tramp,
> With the black night overhead.

But going to bed was nothing to the solitary terrors when I got there, terrors of I knew not what, but which were as real to me as fire or burglars. Scores of times have I crept out of my cot, and in my nightgown waited on the stairs by the dining-room till the servants trooped out from prayers, and I knew that in a few minutes more I should have company. People talk with bated breath of the existence of Evil in the world, but the apprehension of Evil, round about the bed head, that haunts the innocent child, is at least as hard a nut to crack. We find out things as we grow up, but they make the lives of millions miserable, some of whom do not grow up. My old nurse used to

say to me when I was naughty, 'It's no wonder, Master James, that you are so afraid o' nights,' thereby not indirectly hinting that the Devil himself was at the bottom of it. By this she aggravated my fears not a little; but I have since come to the conclusion she was right, for that it should enter into the nature of Providence to terrify a defenceless child is a theory too strong for a stomach perhaps exceptionally delicate upon such points of theology.

My earliest recollection of a habit at that time of life was a trick I had of hiding under the dinner-table when there was a party, and nipping the legs of the guests, both male and female, to give them the impression that I was a dog. This might have been funny, but does not now strike me as being well-behaved. It is said that everyone must learn by personal experience, but I was so fortunate as to be cured of this offence at the expense of another. A very morose cousin of mine, who well knew who had pinched him, kicked out, as he thought (or rather as he *said* he thought), at the supposed dog with such unnecessary violence that (failing to hit

me) he broke (or barked) my uncle's shin. It was a lesson to me for the rest of my childhood, nor did the old gentleman soon forget it.

The strongest impression on my mind at that time of life is my finding a half-sovereign one day in my little waistcoat pocket. This may be thought a small thing, but if the adult reader was to find a thousand-pound note crumpled up in his purse the circumstance would not be more astonishing to him. Half-a-crown at that time had been the extent of my resources; gold was as unknown to me as platinum. Without revealing my tremendous secret to any member of the household I ran down the street to the local Bank, with the official of which (through my father being treasurer for the county) I was quite familiar. I tendered it to the head clerk, not as a sum to be paid in to my current or deposit account, but as an asset of which I had some doubt, simply because my possession of it seemed too good to be true. 'I am sorry to say, Master James, that the half-sovereign is a bad one; you see it is not milled,' was his reply. I did not

see that nor anything else, for the sun seemed to have gone out of the heavens. It was the sudden reduction from riches to poverty which upset me. But what was really a very curious question and one which remains unanswered to this day, who could have had the brutality to play such a trick upon a little boy?

It is not the importance of an incident that impresses itself upon our imagination, but its inexplicability. As I was reading my Bible one day in a village church when I was a young man, in order to become oblivious to a very dull sermon, I came upon the passage 'The days of his youth hast Thou shortened,' with a drop of fresh blood upon it. It was certainly not *my* blood, and still less likely to be anybody else's, and the circumstance made a great impression upon me. I felt it was a prophecy of early death, which can hardly be said to have been accomplished. I once consulted a theologian upon the point, and he remarked that, notwithstanding its nonfulfilment, it might nevertheless have been a warning; what he doubtless

meant was that it was the explanation of a (comparatively) blameless life. But at all events, however slight the circumstance, it will always seem to me a most remarkable one.

The next thing I remember is equally trifling, but illustrates an old-world portion of ecclesiastical life—that part of life at least which one passed in church. I must have been a little older, and we were living at Letcombe House, near Wantage, which we rented of the squire. We had his pew upon the understanding that he was to use it himself when he had a mind, and his presence in it gave me a 'fearful joy.' It was a very large affair, hung round with red curtains (like a bar parlour), and with a huge fireplace. It was my self-imposed mission to make up the fire in winter, with the special injunction laid upon me that in so doing I was not to make a noise. This was not for the sake of the clergyman, and far less of the congregation, but in order that the old squire's slumbers should not be disturbed. Nobody minded his going to sleep, which regularly took place when the ser-

mon began, but his snoring was tremendous. It was a sound that could not be ignored, and must have been discouraging to any divine. Strange clergymen were much put out by it, and would make significant pauses in their discourse, which had the desired effect of waking him. 'Sent to sleep with sound and waked with silence,' the old squire would utter such vocal sounds as made the parson regret his success. 'Eh?' 'What?' 'Who spoke?' 'Put some more wood on, Jimmy,' and with that prudential speech he again retired to the 'land of Nod.'

The squire was no less a person than Thomas Goodlake, at that date an old man beyond the seventies, but who had been in his time the handsomest man in Berkshire. He was the Chairman of Quarter Sessions, and greatly respected and admired, but much impoverished in fortune. His money had almost all gone to the dogs, chiefly greyhounds, of which he still kept a large kennel. As a child I always pictured him accompanied by some of those beautiful animals, with Fortescue

(flash of memory), his trainer. He was a great *bon vivant*, and to the last kept an excellent table. His taste was always consulted when he was asked out to dinner, and he was helped (like Royalty) before the ladies. I remember, when I was about fifteen, sitting opposite to a dish of snipe with one landrail. 'Mr. Goodlake,' I said, 'will you have some snipe or the landrail?'

'Why, you young fool,' was the uncompromising reply, 'the landrail of course.'

His recipes for every description of delicacy were thought very highly of. I have one in my dear mother's handwriting, entitled 'Mr. G.'s mince-meat,' which is admirably characteristic. 'Chop the suet in pieces, *the size of small dice*,' is one of the recommendations; and the whole precious mixture was to be put in jars and buried in the earth.

Many a time have I met the squire in his brougham, in which his huge body exactly fitted like a chestnut in its shell, and been given an invitation that had less charm for me, in my ignorant

adolescence, than for him. 'I have a Severn salmon for dinner, my boy, and a couple of Aylesbury ducks.'

Where our tastes more coincided was for the game of whist. He taught me, when a very small boy, how to play it, and never had tutor a more enthusiastic pupil. I have cause to be grateful to him, for he thus laid the foundation of the greatest source of amusement and recreation in a long and busy life. I was never a first-class player—which, considering the time I have devoted to the game, does not speak well for my intelligence—but I was a very tolerable performer from an early age. Even when too young to be a partner, I used to watch the game with eager interest, and often, when the kind old squire was present and had been fortunate at his shilling points, he would give me a handful of silver 'to go to school with.' I have nothing but humorous and pleasant memories of him, but I can fancy his not having been a favourite with strait-laced people. The country side was full of stories of his hot youth: among others this one. He had

an aunt from whose demise he justly entertained great expectations; he waited with patience till she was ninety years of age, and then caused a large cannon to be fired off from a hill-top in the vicinity of her residence, with no evil design, but simply to draw the attention of the authorities to the fact of her existence in case of their having forgotten all about her.

He had sown his wild oats long before I knew him, but there had been a fine crop of them, of which he thought very little. My last remembrance of him was at a dinner at which a bishop was present. The conversation, turning on human frailty, became a little too improving for the squire. 'Well,' he said, taking vast quantities of snuff, and dropping it as usual over his ample white waistcoat, 'I can only say, my lord, that if I were to write all my little peccadilloes upon yonder wall, there would be nothing to blush at.' I was greatly alarmed lest he should do it, and so, I believe, was the bishop. His political creed would now be considered peculiar. 'I voted,' he used to say, for

Catholic Emancipation and the Reform Bill, and I have lived to see the evils of both.'

In my youth I lived for years among the Berkshire downs, a marvellous expanse of springy turf, blown over by the most delicious airs, and, though treeless, not without a certain wild beauty. In addition to the famous Ridgeway, which had seen the march of the Roman legions, there were for the lovers of archæology barrows and encampments in all directions; but what took my boyish fancy most were the crosses cut on the turf to mark where waggoners had been run over, or more frequently travellers 'smoored' in the snow. It was very unpleasant to be caught on the downs in snow or fog, and, indeed, it was easy enough to lose one's bearings on them at any time of the year. I remember a carriage used by some of my people in those early days with curtains that drew in front of it, and a good part of a summer's night on one occasion was spent in it, waiting for the mist to lift. It was like sitting in a room with a blind, but without a window.

The pleasantest spectacle on the downs was the string of racehorses which were trained upon them. They took their trial gallops there in the early morning; men with horsewhips investigated the gorse to make certain no touts were concealed there; and giant ladders were brought, with just room for the owner and trainer to stand on a little platform at their junction to watch the trial from end to end.

The two things, however, with which my memory especially associates the downs was the hawking and the hoop-hunting. The first lasted but a little while—I think only for two seasons—and was then discontinued, but it was a most picturesque spectacle. The hawks, with their hoods and bells, upon the wrists of their keepers, waiting to be loosed at the prey (which, by-the-by, were only crows), the mad gallop over the turf, with one eye in the air and the other looking out for roads and ruts, the pursuit and escape or death of the game, and the white lure that brought the noble birds back to their masters. I have not described

the thing technically, and quite probably all wrong; but the humorous side of the proceeding was that not one of those who took part in it out of ten knew what they were doing, their knowledge of the customs of the Middle Ages being exceedingly limited. The general feeling of the sportsmen was, I think, that they preferred hunting and coursing—or at all events some sport that admitted of one's seeing where one was going—to hawking.

A more juvenile amusement belonging to the downs, but with infinitely more fun in it to my boyish taste, was hoop-hunting. All that was requisite to enjoy this pastime was a high wind. We took our hoops—half a dozen of them sometimes—to the top of the first hill and started them; then, after one minute's 'law,' we followed them, but never caught them save by misadventure. Their speed was incredible, and far surpassed that of the bicycle. Down one hill and up another, apparently at the same rate; and when any obstacle, such as a road with high banks, intervened, they surmounted it with deer-like leaps and bounds.

A more graceful sight could hardly be imagined. I have known a hoop run five miles, and only stopped because it arrived at a 'bottom,' the limit of the downs in that direction. It would have needed a racehorse to overtake them. We got the hoops from a brewery owned by an uncle of mine, and whenever the smell of brewing—delicious aroma—comes to my nostrils, I am, for half a minute, a boy again, capless, careless, with my foot on the turf and the wild west wind in my hair.

Our neighbours—not very numerous—were chiefly clergy. One of them, unusually learned, was much given to Greek quotations. I was learning Greek at that time—a language which I was glad was dead and wished was buried—and those sonorous lines of his, to which the ladies listened with reverent awe, irritated me extremely. One of them asked me once in a hushed whisper the translation of one of these quotations. 'You are at school,' she said, 'and ought to know.' I gave her to understand, with an opportune blush, that it was scarcely meet for a lady's ear.

'Good heavens!' she cried, 'you don't mean to say——'

'Pray don't quote me in the matter,' I put in pleadingly; 'but I really—no, I really couldn't tell you'—which was quite true. She went away and told all her lady friends that Mr. C. indulged in quotations which were not such as could be translated to modest ears. It injured his character for a long time, but cured him of a very bad habit. It was my first appearance in the *rôle* of a public benefactor.

I had another adventure with a cleric—Mr. A.—in another part of the country, at a much earlier age. I was again only a witness—though this time not a false witness—but the affair impressed itself indelibly on my memory. This clergyman was an old friend, and I was stopping in his house. He was a very handsome, kind old fellow, and the best shot in the county. The lord of the manor was a real lord, and the rector entertained a very proper respect for him on that account, though he had few other claims to it. They got on very well for some

time, but at last, as was inevitable, my friend being very quick-tempered and his lordship exceedingly arrogant, they fell out. The parson was no more asked to his lordship's shooting parties; but it so happened that the rectory fields, which were rather extensive, lay in the centre of his lordship's preserves, and when his great battues were held the rector also invited *his* party of friends, and, as all his lordship's game were driven across this strip of ecclesiastical property, they made excellent bags. I was in Mr. A.'s study one morning, reading 'Captain Cook's Voyages' as I lay on the floor—my favourite literary position at that time—when Lord B. was announced. I had only met one lord in my life before, and was delighted at this second opportunity. Because I was so very young that it did not matter, or because my host forgot my existence altogether (being on my stomach under the table), I was not directed to withdraw, and thereby I became a spectator of the interview. His lordship was not of an imposing appearance, and, almost inarticulate with rage, he let out at the rector with

great vehemence about his conduct concerning the game, and every now and then paused for breath. 'Pray go on, my lord,' said the rector on these occasions, in a tone of voice which even to my inexperienced ears seemed the reverse of conciliatory. At last his lordship, puffing and blowing, observed, 'There, now you know what I think of you. If you had not been a clergyman I would have said a great deal more.'

Then the rector rose from his chair—the whole six-feet-two of him—and pointed to the door. 'If I had not been a clergyman,' he said in a terrible voice, 'you would not have dared to say half as much. Now be off with you.' I had known him speak in the same tone only to trespassers and poachers. It was a most exciting scene, and long afterwards, whenever I heard the phrase 'The Church militant,' I associated it with my venerable host.

Though an old man, he was very strong and active. Lord B. was the patron of the living, and one of his methods of annoying him, after this

little encounter, was continually to send people down to look at him, with an eye to the purchase of the next presentation. Whenever the rector used to see a fly from the station coming down the drive with a stranger in it, he would ring the bell for his manservant. 'If that gentleman asks for me, John, tell him I'm exercising the colt.' At which piece of information the stranger would drive away with very black looks indeed.

The other lord I had had the honour of knowing, when I was a very tiny little chap, was of a different kind. He came down to stay with us when my father was Clerk to the Thames Commissioners—a remunerative post at that time—and spent a whole morning, I remember, directing envelopes. 'Mamma,' I said, pointing to the eminent person, with a dumpy finger, 'Papa's got a new clerk.' My mother looked distressed, but Lord C. roared with laughter. 'A very good guess,' he said, 'young gentleman.' As a matter of fact, the day being wet, and his lordship very good-

natured, he had been occupying himself in writing 'franks' for my father.

The first attempt to educate me—which, I am sorry to say, from first to last was a most disastrous failure—took place somewhere at this period. A Dissenting schoolmaster who had a small commercial academy in the town, which it was quite out of the question, with my High-Church principles and exalted position, I should attend, came for a couple of hours in the early morning for my instruction. His name, by a miracle of memory, I remember to have been Thynn, and so very tender were my years that I thought he was called so on account of his lean and lank appearance. I believe the poor fellow was half-starved, for when on one occasion he was asked to breakfast he amazed me by cutting off that projecting foot of the bacon which nobody eats, along with the usual slice, and devouring it with apparent relish. What ridiculous and futile things abide in our memories! That is positively all I remember of my first preceptor.

It is dangerous, however, to reproach persons with this failing, to which the following example, that subsequently came under my notice, testifies. A tutor of a college, more remarkable for his satire than his urbanity, asked some question in the combination-room of the bursar, to which the latter replied rather petulantly, 'How should I know? One can't remember everything.' 'No,' replied the other softly, 'but this was so very unimportant.' After some years the tutor was appointed Regius Professor of Greek. He had an impression that he could hold both posts, and did so for some time, till it was discovered that it was illegal. The fact was 'ferreted out' by the bursar, who blandly remarked that it was just one of those insignificant and unimportant matters that suited his capacity. A slight is always a misnomer as regards him who uses it, for the whirligig of time never fails to bring its revenges, and in this case it cost exactly a thousand a year. In point of time this incident ought not of course to have found a place here, but if I had not put it down when it came into my

mind, it is ten to one I should have forgotten it altogether.

My bacon-eating tutor was the first rung, as it were, of a long ladder of preceptors. I am quite ashamed of myself when I think of the very 'liberal education'—or the education which at all events was liberally paid for—I received, and the very little that came of it. It cost my dear mother from first to last, I believe, more than two thousand pounds; but if 'payment by results' had been the principle on which it had been conducted, it would have been—well, I don't like to mention the sum, but—something in two figures. It is sometimes said in defence of an extravagant expenditure, that it at all events gave the spendthrift a great deal of pleasure; but though I had what I am confidently assured were the advantages of a good education, I did not at all enjoy them.

This seems to have been predicted by a poetess of my acquaintance who was accustomed to charm my childish ear with fairy stories, and who, fifty years ago and more, sent me written in print, for I

could not then read handwriting, this very pretty poem :—

I am far from the land where my young hero grieves,
And dull are the images fancy now weaves,
To those glittering visions of warriors and dames,
That erst sprang at the bidding of gallant Prince James.

Who himself well portrayed, in his childhood's fresh prime,
A miniature knight of the good olden time,
Ever prompt in the fray or the banquet to share,
Ever courteous and kind with his own lady fair.

'Tis hard that dull pedants with book and with rule
Should scout the philosophy taught in my school;
For wand light as fairy's wield birch rod instead,
And cram with dry learning your poor little head.

Yet in morals and manners, or marvellous feat,
Can Trojan or Greek with my worthies compete?
Would Hercules dare with Prince Lupin to vie,
Or pull Nessus' shirt through a fine needle's eye?

To Sir Gawaine or Cherry, in amorous suits,
What seem Theseus and Paris but unpolished brutes?
Just as Venus and Helen light characters were
By Finetta the prudent or Princess all fair.

Be yours then, my boy, the true Knight Errant's part,
To aid, to redress—ready hand, open heart—
To your creed, to your Queen, to your country rest true,
Nor till oné love prove faithless, e'er seek for a new.

Thus when honours and greatness have fallen to your lot—
Field Marshal, Prime Minister, Heaven knows what—
May your parents stand gazing in transports of pride,
And my prettiest granddaughter blush as your bride.

I don't know at what period it took place in my young life, but for some time I was haunted by the idea—begotten, I fear, as much by egotism as imagination—that I was the only person in the world worth consideration. This is, of course, not uncommon; but my view was that I was the only person in the world who had any real existence at all; that the others were but shadows; and that the whole universe was one vast deception, the object of which was to make a fool of me. That this fantasy must have lasted for some time and made a strong impression on me, is certain, for I was old enough to write a poem about it:—

When the doors have closed behind us, and the voices died away,
Do the singers cease their singing, and the children end their play?
Do the words of wisdom well no more through the calm lips of age?
Are the fountains dried whence the young draw hopes too deep for the faith of the sage?
And, like the flower that closes up when the east begins to glow,
Doth the maiden's beauty fade from off her tender cheek and brow?
Are they all but subtle spirits changing into those and these,
To vex us with a feigned sorrow, or to mock us while they please?

All this world a scene phantasmal, shifting aye to something strange,
Such as, if but disenchanted, one might mark in act to change.
See the unembodied beings that we hold of our own kind,
Friend and foe, and kin and lover, each a help to make us blind,
Set to watch our lonely hours, ambushing about our path,
That our eyes may never open till their lids are closed in death;
And when so closed, will these things be as though we had ne'er been born,
And e'en without those tears which are dried swift as the dews by the morn,
That makes us feel these fancies more, so strange doth it appear,
How the memory of a dead man dies with those he held most dear,
As though there was an end, with life, of the mockery that beguiles
Our every act, tricks out our woes, and cheats us of our smiles,
And makes to love, and scorn, and hate, and parts and reconciles.

I dare say this theory has been entertained by others, but it affected me unpleasantly in a weird and uncanny fashion. Much has been said of the strange consciousness we sometimes feel of some situation or conversation having been somewhere or some time previously experienced: on two occasions this duplicate impression has occurred to myself, but these had not the force or seeming reality of the above fancy.

I was far from being an idle boy—and my worst

enemies will hardly accuse me of being an idle man —but somehow I never cottoned to my studies. I never liked Latin, and I detested Greek. Great heavens, what have I not suffered from that hateful tongue! One hears talk of the 'Dead Hand' and its enormities, but what are they compared with the brutalities inflicted on the young by the dead languages? The bubble of classical education has burst now, or is in process of bursting, but in my day it was a blister, and it was applied to every boy. The whole system was a cruel despotism tempered by cribs; but for them we should have perished miserably among the paulo-post futurums and the aorists. If I had suddenly become rich at fourteen or so I would have founded an asylum for schoolboys who could not understand Greek, so much I pitied them as well as myself; but it would have been a gigantic undertaking. What would have seemed very humorous, if it had not been so hard, this language, though being so admittedly difficult, was taught at my school by means of a Latin grammar; moreover the subjects of study

were mostly the poets. To any one who knows the British schoolboy the attempt to teach him poetry, even in his own tongue, would seem quixotic enough; conceive, therefore, what came of the efforts to teach him Greek poetry. Healing Time, it is true, in nine cases out of ten, when we become twenty-five years of age at farthest, erases every scrap of this language from our minds; but I shall never forget what I suffered in the attempt to acquire it. When I think, too, that at least eight hundred pounds out of that educational expenditure must have been paid for Greek—*my* Greek—(for it is a most expensive commodity)—I cannot but think there was a good deal of imposition (as indeed there certainly was in one sense) in connection with it.

It may well be remarked, 'You tell us what you did not learn at your various educational seminaries, but not what you did learn.' That is just my difficulty. May I be taught Greek in another world if I know what I did learn! The three R's (which I have found very useful) I mastered before I left

home. Perhaps I acquired 'the tone'—a mysterious and costly commodity only to be procured at a public school—but that is doubtful. At the same time I read a great many books (chiefly novels and poems) which were not in the *curriculum* during recreation hours, and while my young friends tried to forget their woes in the intoxication of cricket, a game which, in my case, unlike tea, equally failed to cheer or to inebriate.

If I did not 'love my larning,' it was not because I disliked my tutors, with whom, on the whole, I got on much better than with the boys. The boy is charming in Art, and sometimes quite virtuous in Fiction; but in real life he is intolerable. His wit is buffoonery, his humour is practical joking, his deity is the head boy in the school, and his devil is the head-master. He loves idleness, cruelty, dirt, and athletic exercises like the savage. There is a delusion abroad that he does not share the weakness of the adult for wealth and station; but he has in reality a very accurate notion on which side his bread is buttered, and would sell his

soul for five bob, half to be paid in tuck. He has also a fine contempt for the poor.

His treatment of the usher is an illustration of this. That unhappy individual—a very different person from the under-master of a public school, of course—is the target for his pupils' scorn; his frayed and threadbare garments, and, above all, his Sunday suit—but too often much too brilliant—are everlasting subjects for their ridicule. Captives, among the North American Indians, are given over by them to be tormented by the children before their final doom; this is what the gods do with ushers. What have the poor wretches done, one wonders, to deserve such a fate? The boys invent all kinds of crimes as having been what old Burton calls 'a cause'; but the chief crime of all ushers has probably been their poverty. It was an evil hour in which necessity suggested to them this hopeless calling. Every other occupation may lead to something better save this one. There was an Archbishop Usher, I believe; but he was only a namesake. The sole individual, as far as I know,

who became eminent while in this profession was Eugene Aram—and he was more notorious than famous. Dr. Johnson, it is true, was an usher, but he gave up that business early. Nothing gives me so amazing an impression of his independence of character as the fact that it survived even that ordeal; for an usher must have neither will nor way of his own, no opinion, no anything; but is the mere humble instrument of his employer.

In the first school I went to—a preparatory one for Eton—there were two such men, Mr. D. and Mr. G., who, because of the difference in their altitudes, were called 'Dwarf' and 'Giant.' They had many other nicknames, but these were the least uncomplimentary ones. There was a little boy at that school who was very unhappy; he was told by his guardian (for he had no parents) that such was the lot of small boys, and that, as to bullying and the rest of it, he must not distress himself, because when he got old enough it would be his privilege to make the lives of other small boys equally unpleasant in his turn. This brilliant

prospect failed, however, to comfort him, and the delicate little creature, whose position suggested nothing so much as an Italian greyhound in a kennel of bulldogs, was, like Niobe, all tears (and smears), even during the hours of study. During those allotted to recreation he was, of course, much more miserable He wrote to a little sister at home, bewailing his sad case, and describing how he wept in school-time; and his guardian read the letter, and, at her instigation, came over to investigate matters. Then it was that I pitied Mr. D. and Mr. G. even more than the schoolboy. The object of the head-master was to discredit the child's statements; or, at least, prove them grossly exaggerated. So the two ushers were summoned to the drawing-room.

'These two gentlemen,' said the head-master to the visitor, 'who have every opportunity of seeing what passes in school-time, will tell you whether your ward was, as he has written to his sister, crying all lesson-time. Mr. G., what do you say?'

Mr. G. had both seen and remarked upon the child's distress during the period mentioned, but what *was* he to do? To tell the truth would be to lose his situation. 'No, sir,' he said (but with a very high colour), 'no boy was crying during lesson-time.'

'And you, Mr. D., what do you say?'

The Dwarf had a little more conscience, or perhaps, reflected he was risking less (by 10*l.* per annum) than his colleague. 'I cannot say, sir,' he murmured, 'that my attention was particularly directed' (though it had been) 'to the young gentleman.'

It was a most unhappy exhibition, and when the news came, some six months afterwards, that the little fellow was dead, both the Giant and the Dwarf were very sorry—on their own account.

The usher that I best remember was during a later period of my life, when I was at what is now called a 'cramming' school, preparatory for the Woolwich Academy. He was essentially 'a character'—not, perhaps, a very good one, but he

interested me. He was a scholar, or seemed to be one by comparison with the other masters, including his employer, and was always quoting scraps of Greek, which was Greek indeed to his hearers. The attire of some fancy ushers I have known, as regards the Sunday suit, may be described as 'not neat, but gaudy'; but Mr. Casterton (as I will call him) had no weakness of this kind. He had, indeed, like Joseph (whom, in some other points, he by no means resembled) a coat of many colours; but it was made up of shreds and patches, and resembled those patchwork quilts in which our grandmothers delighted, save that they were all old patches. This was, of course, his study coat; he had no pride in it—he prided himself only on his scholarship—yet he forbore to wipe his pen (as was the custom with his brethren) upon his lappets; he always wiped it in his hair. This was very grey, and the ink made it more juvenile looking, which was erroneously thought to be his object. He detested the head-master (though not so much as I did), and relieved his feelings by abusing him in

the Greek language. I know this because, sure of my sympathy, he was so good, in a confidential moment, as to translate one of these Philippics; his name for our enemy was Thersites—'the basest Greek,' as he was careful to inform me, 'that ever came to Troy.' Where he made a more regrettable mistake, to my mind, was in having ever come to Woolwich.

If Mr. Casterton was not the eldest usher that ever wore grey hairs (streaked with ink), he was the eldest I ever knew by far, and it seemed to me a pleasant trait in him that he delighted in fiction. But such fiction! One has heard of great scholars relaxing their gigantic intellects over Sir Walter Scott and even Miss Austen, but this gentleman relaxed his over penny novelettes. These were not so common then as they are now, but they were equally dull, and dealt even more exclusively with Duchesses and Countesses. An adventure that befell him, if told as it took place, would have more befitted the pages of 'Roderick Random' than of this modest history. He had a private scheme for

starting an opposition school to that of his principal, which he was so foolish as to impart to some boys of larger growth. He showed them his advertisements in the newspaper, and they answered one of them. The result was that Mr. Casterton went to town to visit the disrespectable mother of two imaginary pupils. He came back after a prolonged absence with an eye that was still black and a thirst for revenge that was never slaked, the circumstances under which he had undertaken the enterprise being such as to render the revelation of his grievance impossible.

The reference to 'Roderick Random' suggests a view that was entertained in my young days as to the effect of coarse literature upon the youthful mind. It was said that it shrank from the grossness of vice, and was more liable to be injured by the delicate suggestions of it than by its actual picture. 'Don Juan,' for example (to take a very mild specimen of the latter class), was thought to be less hurtful than 'Lalla Rookh.' This may be so with girls (though I doubt it), but certainly not

with boys. Humour, no doubt, of which there is such a plenty in Smollett and Fielding, is a disinfectant of coarseness with natures that possess humour; but unfortunately it is only a very few boys who have this gift, and what most pleases them in 'Roderick Random' and 'Tom Jones' is just what should please them the least. In saying this I know that I run counter to the opinion of many cultured persons even now; but I am too old for illusions of this kind—if, indeed, I was ever so weak as to entertain them. I am told boys have been much improved since I was one of them, and it may be so; but certainly in my time they more resembled those described by Cowper in his 'Tirocinium' than by Mr. Hughes in 'Tom Brown.' As to the abominable cruelty too often characteristic of them, there is an explanation for it known to all physiologists, though not, apparently, to pedagogues; it is evident, indeed, to the most superficial observer that this hateful attribute (save in exceptionally brutal natures) ceases at the period of adolescence.

In my day it seemed to be considered, with

respect to boys, that the possession of youth was happiness enough for anybody, and that little care need be taken to decrease the sum of its miseries. I am now a very old boy indeed, and have had my share of the toils and troubles, the cares and woes, of adult humanity; but its darkest hour cannot be compared with the wretchedness I endured at my first school. In that respect my experience coincides with that of Anthony Trollope, which is curious, since my sorrows did not arise from the same cause, and our characters had little in common. I cannot but ascribe some of the extraordinarily high spirits I possessed as a young man —and in a less degree for many years afterwards— to a sense of emancipation from school slavery. Thomas Hood, it is true, remarks that 'it is little joy to know one's farther off from heaven than when one was a boy,' but that arose from an optical illusion with respect to the neighbourhood of the poplar tree to the sky.

When I was a boy I had a pony, but though on good terms with it, could never make it the object

of worship which that species of property generally becomes to its possessors. I belonged to an equine family and perhaps got a little bored with too much horse as a topic of conversation. Why country hosts should take their guests to their stables as a morning treat was what I could never discover. It is not a rose garden. When still a very young man I was the cause of a great deal of mirth in the family circle by coming home from Reading races on somebody else's horse. A friend had lent me a bay one to ride there, and I had come back upon a bay one, but it was not the same bay. As there were a score of horses in the tent, and this one was brought out to me by the man in charge of them, I took it upon trust. Many years after I learned by the fate of another what a risk I had run. An acquaintance of mine, Mr. E., a barrister in large practice, who thought less of his horse than his briefs, and was, indeed, a very careless rider, was accustomed to ride into town every morning and put up his horse at a Westminster livery stable, close to the courts. On one occasion

he returned somewhat earlier than usual, and rode off. Another barrister, Mr. B., who knew him well, and was accustomed to use the same stable, arrived later and called for his horse. When it was brought out, he said: 'This is not my horse.' 'I am very sorry,' said the man, 'but there has been a mistake; your horse has been given to Mr. E.' 'Then he is a dead man!' cried Mr. B. And so it was. B.'s horse was a buck-jumper, and poor E., whose steed was a very quiet one, and who never dreamt he was bestriding a strange animal, had been thrown over his head and killed on the spot.

Though never much attracted by athletic games, I became a member of a county cricket club, but did not long remain an active member. The ball on one occasion persisted in its undesirable swiftness, even after it had passed the wicket at which it was aimed; a natural impulse caused me to attempt to stop it with my straw hat instead of my hand. So far from this act of self-sacrifice (for the crown of my hat was carried away) being appreciated, it was considered an unscientific proceeding,

and I was never invited to play again. I found the luncheon-tent, however, very pleasant, and the conversation of the vice-president, whose age absolved him from being bowled at, most entertaining. He commiserated my youth and innocence, and gave me several precepts for my future conduct of a practical nature. Here are two of them: 'If any one offers to bet you, my lad, that a reputed pint holds no more than three-quarters of a real pint, take him. It commonly does not hold more; but fill the bottle and put the cork in, then turn it upside down and fill 'the kick,' and you will find it does hold more. You may pick up many a half-crown by this little plan.

His other piece of advice was even still more ingenious. 'When tossing (especially for money) never cry "tails," but always "woman." Supposing the coin is one of her present Majesty's reign, and it comes down heads, cry "Woman it is," and it is ten to one that your opponent will not discover the subtlety of your device.' These moral precepts he inculcated with the gravity of Socrates in his

instruction of youth, but without his verbal quibbles. To say that this is what comes of a man having passed fifty years of his life in playing cricket may be generalising too hastily from insufficient data, but the example seems to tend in that direction.

My acquaintance with this old gentleman must have been early in those halcyon days when the chrysalis state of schoolboy, or more accurately the grub, has passed, and the butterfly existence of undergraduate has commenced. There is, however, no parallel in the insect world compared with the bright and brilliant change that took place in my case. The 'Transmigrations of Indur' have little more surprising and nothing more delightful in them. I cannot conceal from myself that as a boy I was very, very far from popular. I dare say there were much better (or worse) reasons for this; but on inquiry of a contemporary in later years as to what he thought was the cause of it, he answered; 'Well, for one thing'—as though to go through the whole list would have been fatiguing—'you

were so blooming facetious'; only he used a much stronger word than 'blooming.'

At the University they do not object to facetiæ. My male relatives who had gone to college were all Oxford men, and I believe it was because I was supposed to possess certain mathematical gifts that I was sent to Cambridge. I am at a loss to know what they were, and I am afraid that they merely consisted in a distate for the classics. However, it was fortunately not expected that I should take honours; it would satisfy my mother if I took my degree, or, in other words, if I took any other course than that in my mind, which was to go at once to London and commence a literary life upon my own account, against which the fact that I was very poorly equipped for it was not one of her objections. She thought, dear soul, that I was clever enough for anything, but feared Bohemia and its temptations, of which she had heard something, heaven knows how, but knew nothing. So to Cambridge I went, rather unwillingly. Those who knew me best had considerable doubt whether I

could muster sufficient learning to pass the entrance examination into Trinity; but this feat was accomplished, and though I have always detested examinations and read for them against the grain, yet somehow or other I have always got through them—not without difficulty, far from it, but without discredit. There is rather a large class of persons in the world, I think, who have no great aptitude for this or that, but when their heads are put at it, like a hunter's at a bullfinch, and there is no escape from the ordeal, acquit themselves well enough to no one's astonishment more than their own.

I have used the grub and the butterfly as a metaphor to express the transition of the schoolboy to the undergraduate not so much from its novelty as for its applicability. A grub, and generally a dirty one, he suddenly finds himself in possession of a dressing-case, gorgeous clothing, and what seems to him unlimited credit. A summer lasting three years lies before him in which he may bask in the sunshine or flit from

flower to flower, and then his little life is ended—the slide is removed from the magic lantern, and the day of illusion is done. Of course there are those who come up to the University 'to stay,' and who, if they have staying powers, do so; but to the majority that period of existence remains a thing apart for the rest of their lives. If they cannot convince themselves that that fine careless rapture they can never recapture, let them revisit their *Alma Mater* after a few years, and find how utterly they are out of tune with it. I enjoyed College life immensely; but with those who think that a University course is a good training-ground to fit us for the world without, I cannot agree.

When a young gentleman of literary tastes, but not of classical or mathematical attainments, goes to College, he generally gravitates toward the Union. To distinguish himself there as a speaker has almost as great an attraction for him as to appear in print, and it is an ambition easily gratified. His public is ready made for him, perfectly willing to listen to him—within certain limits—and not in-

disposed to applaud if he is tolerably amusing. At this distance of time I may say without self-flattery that I was a popular speaker—though it would be more correct to say reciter, for I learned all my speeches by heart. So long as I sat in my chair I have had no difficulty at any time of my life in talking, but directly I got on my legs the faculty of thought has deserted me. I could only remember, and sometimes, alas! not even that. I well recollect breaking down in a most brilliant oration from the circumstance of my having put the notes for it in a wrong pocket, and being exposed to the scathing eloquence of a Unionic opponent in consequence. My forlorn and humiliated condition, as I stood like a penitent before it without a word to say for myself, aroused the good-natured sympathy of the House, whose encouraging cheers, however, only rendered me more helplessly idiotic; but that adversary of mine, who could talk by the hour about nothing at all, was merciless.

'The hon. member,' he said, 'appears to have

left his wits at home, which is apt to be the case with those who learn their speeches by heart.'

But by that time I had found my notes, and, instead of arranging my gown like Julius Cæsar, as had been my intention in order to die decently, managed under its folds to catch a sight of them.

'It is true,' I replied, 'that I give some time and preparation beforehand to what I am about to say here, because I think it more respectful to this House than to give them the first thing that happens to come into my mind.'

Nothing better pleases an audience, whatever it be, than to have itself complimented, and thunders of applause greeted this senatorial rebuke, after which the recitation proceeded without a hitch. Even when my reputation, however, as a politician (of the humorous kind) was more established, it was still subject to occasional depreciation. In an assembly of graver and more reverend seigniors than I was accustomed to find myself, a professor of acknowledged learning, but who had exposed himself to public ridicule on more than one occasion

by injudicious behaviour, was expressing his opinion that the speakers at the Union were a set of fools. He was near-sighted, and, of course, unaware of my presence; and the host, wishing to make matters less unpleasant to me, observed:

'I think you must allow that our friend Payn is an exception, professor.'

'Oh, certainly; I had forgotten him. Payn is a funny fool.'

'Never mind,' whispered my host, comfortingly, 'the professor does not know much about humour.'

'No,' I replied, lugubriously; 'but he knows a great deal about folly'—a remark which was considered by some people as rather smart for an undergraduate, and by others as rather impudent.

After all, getting one's speeches by heart is not so bad as getting other people's speeches and delivering them as one's own. An instance of it is recorded in the 'Sketches of Cantabs,' where one honourable member leaves the House incontinently because his oratory has been word for word anticipated; and it was not an uncommon case. The

Union in other respects was not a bad imitation of St. Stephens. The audience was very good-natured, and not more boisterous at their worst than is the House on an Irish night; but perhaps they were a little less tolerant of bores. To those whose future lives lay in the direction of politics it was undoubtedly a useful training-ground, and many an eminent politician do I remember assuring his friends that 'he came down to the House that night with no intention of addressing it,' in the same Parliamentary sense that he uses the words to-day.

I am much afraid that the record of my studies at the University, if published in the 'Educationalist,' would not be for edification. As to classics I had an excellent memory, and could quote more largely from cribs than most people. This gift always enabled me to take a respectable place in the College examinations; but on one occasion it had a very sad result, for it created the impression upon the head lecturer that I must have taken the crib in with me. Indeed, nothing could convince him to the contrary but my sitting down in his

apartment and then and there putting on paper the whole translation over again, which I did, I believe without one word of alteration.

'You certainly have a great deal of reading in your head,' he acknowledged; but added, I thought unnecessarily, 'that is of a certain description.'

And, indeed, I had probably read more than he had, though not quite the same kind of literature.

As to mathematics, I had an intimate friend, a lecturer, who made me to some extent practically acquainted with them; for, having persuaded the College to supply him with models for illustration of his subject, he constituted me his assistant. The pulleys and things did not always work very well—indeed, sometimes did the very contrary to what science had predicted of them—and it was my mission to remedy matters. There were some anonymous lines written about:

> Dodson and pup
> Coaxing a pulley that wouldn't pull up.

And of the glee of the lecture-room at seeing

> The state
> Of total prostration of man and weight.

But it was not the pup's feelings that were hurt by them; science never disappointed *me*. It was to my honoured principal (and confederate) that the world is indebted for the only touch of pathos to be found in statics. 'But when A B is on the same line with C D, E F vanishes, the weight is supported by the immovable fulcrum G, and the body is at rest.' If this be read with the proper tenderness of intonation, and with a drop of the voice at the conclusion, it rarely fails to draw tears.

The only other branch of science I cultivated at the University was whist, at which I was a persevering student. 'Any fellow will play on a wet day,' an enthusiast of the game used to say, 'but give us the man who will play on a fine one,' and I was always the man given to them for that purpose. There are no possible circumstances in which I have not taken a hand at that attractive amusement; though some of them no doubt would be considered peculiar. At a county ball held at a famous inn, to which in my adolescence I was taken by my family contrary to my wishes—for square

dances used to strike me as insipid, and round ones made me sick—there was no arrangement made for whist-players. In company with three other devotees we therefore took possession of a bedroom, in which, however, there was no table, and played upon the washing-stand. At Cambridge I have driven out in the summer time in a dog-cart with (what are now) two prominent senators and a divine of great reputation, and played whist with them in a wood. If it had been a dramatic representation in the open air, it could not have caused more excitement among the agricultural population, and as they persisted in standing round us in several rows and offering their unsought advice as to the conduct of the game, we were compelled to give it up.

Perhaps, however, my most amusing experience in connection with the game was with a long vacation party at Wastwater, where it drizzles for half the week and pours for the other half. A dignitary of the Church was detained there by stress of weather, and every morning inveighed against our

custom of sitting down to cards directly after breakfast; but as time went on and the weather became worse, he grew to take a nearer and nearer interest in our proceedings, and on the fifth morning, after circling round the table like a dove about a dovecote, announced his intention to take a hand.

When I look back upon what is now a long life, the slice of it that has been occupied in that entrancing game has been rather a large one—something like two hours *per diem* upon every 'lawful day'—but it does not strike me as having been misspent. It has been almost the only relaxation of a very hard-working existence, and is mingled with many pleasant recollections and agreeable companionships.

Only once in my life have I played whist for high points—gambled in fact—for they were much higher than I could afford, and I don't regret it. It was at a card club, where, if a stranger was asked to dinner, he might for that one evening join in the play. It was when I was young and foolish, and a friend invited me to dine there and 'have a

shy.' 'But if I lose two rubbers, I shall come away,' I said.

'By all means. Some very distinguished personages go away after one. They say they are "not going to stand and be shot at."'

'But I shall also go away,' I said, 'if I *win* two rubbers.'

'Why not? Some very distinguished personages also do that. They say they feel "woolly," and go home with their plunder.'

The next day my friend met me. 'How did you get on?' he said; 'you left early I noticed.'

'Yes; I felt "woolly."'

As I have said, I am far from regretting the experience, but I do not wish to repeat it. It was not pleasure, though it was profit.

I have never on any other occasion willingly played for stakes that I could not afford, which is the only proper definition of gambling. When it is of consequence to win, and of greater consequence not to lose, whist ceases to be a game and becomes a profession; but so long as we play for stakes

that are in accordance with our means, I confess I see no more harm in it than in any other social pleasure. It is one of those accomplishments which a man must acquire early in order to become a proficient at it; and some men who have that advantage, though with plenty of wits, and grea love for the game, never do so. Such a one, for example, was Bernal Osborne, though he rather 'fancied himself' as a performer, and seldom forebore to conceal any dissatisfaction with his partner. A very nice young fellow, who did not know who he was, and was playing with him for the first time, once came in for these symptoms of disapproval.

'It is no use your scowling at me, old gentleman,' he presently observed, 'for I play as well as I can.'

Osborne's face was a study, and when the rubber was over he came round to me to discuss the outrage.

'Did you ever hear such a remark, and upon *me*, too? Did you ever see me scowl at my partner in my life?'

I was obliged to say that I had sometimes seen him wear an expression which, in a bad light, and translated by one unacquainted with him, might be thought the reverse of conciliatory; but in a few minutes the offender came up to us and made a handsome apology to Osborne, who received it very graciously.

While speaking of whist, by the by, I might as well have mentioned one or two experiences of that game, which I have played very literally with all sorts and conditions of men, from the Prince of the Blood to the farmer. It is the habit of some persons, by way, perhaps, of impressing the state of the score on their minds before leading, to say, 'We have a treble and,' adding the rest of the score or not, as happened, though I have noticed the omission to be the more usual. A good player, but who had the misfortune to be too free with his 'h's,' remarked on one occasion, 'We have a treble hand,' whereupon one of his adversaries observed, 'You have no right to say so, sir, and you deserve to have your cards called.' It was one of the few

instances I have ever known of a man's super-abundance of 'h's' being brought home to him. This sort of half-completed sentence is peculiar to whist players. If a player renounces, his partner never—*never* says, 'Have you no club?' (or whatever it is), but 'Have you no—er—?' Then, after a long pause, he may say 'no club?' but it is generally omitted. I do this myself, but have no notion why I do it.

One of the funniest things I know regarding the game happened to the greatest authority on whist now living. When, as a young man, he first joined a club of repute he was (he says) very modest. As a spectator he was watching four old gentlemen playing their game, when he saw a card on the floor face downwards beside one of them. On the impulse of the moment he said, 'You've dropped,' then stopped, remembering that no outsider should interfere on any pretence. 'I beg your pardon,' he added humbly, 'I should not have spoken.' 'Never mind,' said the old gentleman he had addressed, 'what is it?' 'Well, you have

dropped a card, sir;' and he picked it up and gave it to him. The old gentleman thanked him urbanely, and began to play; he had four by honours and would have easily won the game, but that unfortunately he held fourteen cards, which vitiated the deal. The card belonged to the other pack, both, as usual at the club in question, being white ones. It was not a good beginning for the future authority on whist.

Of course unpleasantnesses will sometimes arise at whist, as at vestry meetings or elsewhere, but I have known no serious ones. A most humorous fracas once occurred at a club of which I was a member. Two men, both excellent whist-players, had quarrelled about some social matter, and did not speak. B. carefully avoided A.'s table, but A., who had no such delicate feelings, remorselessly cut into B.'s. At last, growing very indignant, 'If he does it again,' confided B. to me, 'and he is my partner, I'll lose the rubber for him. I'll not revoke, because that would be unfair, but I'll not win a trick.' I was young and frivolous at that time, and

looked forward to this operation with intense interest. On the ensuing day A. did cut into B.'s table, and they *were* partners. The way in which B. disposed of his kings to A.'s aces and trumped his best cards was quite amazing; all that A. said was, 'Very pretty play.'

The best of the joke was, however, that a member of the club had brought a friend—the then President of the College of Physicians—to see B. play, who had a great reputation. When it was all over I heard the visitor remark, 'Well, I have no doubt Mr. B. is a very fine player, but I confess I could not understand his game.' A. did, however, perfectly, and never cut into B.'s rubber again.

At the clubs which we now find at every fashionable seaside place or health resort there is not much difficulty in finding entrance, so that side by side at the whist table sit persons of an aristocratic type with others who have only money—and often very little of that—to recommend them. A very rich individual, but whose education had been neglected even to the exclusion of the letter 'h,'

very much fancied himself at the whist-table at R., a feeling which was not reciprocated by his partners. On one occasion he played very ill indeed with Colonel J. of 'The Travellers.' He defended his play, however, when rebuked, with vigour, and continued to defend it after the Colonel's departure. ''Ang me,' he said, 'if I don't know how to play whist as well as any man, let it be who it will.'

'Still,' observed someone, 'your late partner knows something about the game, and is thought very highly of as a player at "The Travellers."' 'Very like he may be; but for my part I don't think "'ighly" of them commercial gents.'

Hypnotism had in my College days never been heard of, but there was a kindred branch of mesmerism—electro-biology—much cultivated by travelling professors, and it would not be uncharitable to say mainly in the hands of quacks. One of them came down to Cambridge and gave a lecture in the Town Hall. I had not the faintest belief in such things, and stared at the little leaden disk

that was given to me by the operator with indifferent eyes. In a few minutes, however, I was spellbound. As the lecturer discovered that I was fairly well known (I think I was then President of the Union) among the undergraduates who filled the hall, he gave his particular attention to me, to my intense annoyance. I was unable to remember my name (which he defied me to utter) or that of my College; he offered me a sovereign to strike him (which I would gladly have done for nothing), but I was powerless, and in short nobody could have been made a greater fool for half an hour or so (he might have gone on doing it for ever, and so far he exhibited moderation) than I was by that professor of electro-biology. I was wax in his hands, and, what was worse than all the amusement I gave, the audience was cynical. Not one amongst them but believed that I was shamming and in league with the lecturer. My position, therefore, was doubly humiliating.

The next day my friend W. G. Clark, the Public Orator, invited the professor to his rooms, and the

performance was repeated before a much more select audience. The professor was as successful with me (confound him!) as on the previous day, as also with a young gentleman who now wears a silk gown and enjoys a great reputation. The explanation of the matter given by a great scientific authority present was only partially satisfactory to either of us. He said there was unquestionably some odic force in the experiment, but that its effect was limited to persons of lively imagination—and to idiots. I have since had cause to know that as regards mesmerism I possess considerable 'receptive power,' but, what seems very hard, am quite unable to practise upon other people. Having published more than a hundred volumes, I have doubtless sent a good many of my fellow-creatures to sleep, but never designedly. As to sending myself to sleep, I am thankful to say that has very seldom been necessary; I go there without sending. Whatever may have resulted from my use of the pen, or rather the pencil (for I never write at a desk, but on a 'block,' and generally lying down), I have

worked as hard at my calling as any man—and perhaps a little harder. I attribute my ability to do so to the large doses of sleep I have always taken in defiance of proverbial philosophy. 'Seven hours for a man, eight for a woman, and nine for a fool,' says the old saw, but I have always exceeded the fool's allowance. The great Napoleon could, we are told, sleep when he pleased, which so far allies me to genius, for I possess the same power and exert it much oftener than he did. Still there have been occasions when Morpheus has refused his aid; and as an expert in sleep I may be allowed to give advice under such circumstances. I have never found counting things of the least use (perhaps the calculation was wrong), but I have generally found the conjuring up of a particular landscape—always the same landscape—efficacious. It should be monotonous in character, a level plain with one or two sleepy churches in it; or a great water with no tidal movement. In my case it is the Thames valley seen from the Berkshire downs, with Wittenham Clump on the horizon; when in a very short

time the pleasant fields and farms are seen to 'mix in one another's arms,' and my closed eyes never reach the Clump at all. Another suggestion I would venture to make to the sleepless is, never to think of plans for the future; they might just as well get up and put them on paper, as regards any hope of sleep from *them*; let them dwell upon the past, which, though it may have regret in it (and plenty of it), is free from anxiety or expectation.

CHAPTER II.

I HAD been 'devoted to literature' of a kind that is injuriously called 'light' from childhood, and had spoilt reams of good paper with juvenile compositions. There were probably few undergraduates who had written for so many periodicals (which is, however, a very different thing from writing *in* them) as I had; and I now published a volume of poems, which, if not a financial success, proved a great advantage to me. I may venture to think they had some merit, since they at once introduced me to some of the more genial College authorities, whose acquaintance as a non-reading man I could never have made. W. G. Clark, of whom I have already spoken, was one of them, whose knowledge of English literature was not inferior to the classical attainments for which he was so widely known. He

was very literally a host in himself, and gave the brightest dinner parties in college. Of my obligations to him, both then and for years afterwards, I can never speak too highly. George Brimley the critic was another of those elder friends, whom it would be ungrateful indeed not to remember, for he gave me my first review—in the 'Spectator.' I have had hundreds of notices, at least as favourable as I deserved, since then, but none which gave me such ineffable pleasure. I will not say it was 'a turning point in my career,' as is the usual term for such things, because I don't suppose that anything could have turned me from the course I had marked out for myself, but it encouraged me in it exceedingly.

There is a great deal of bad feeling among authors in respect to criticism, which mainly arises, I think, from an exaggerated estimate of its power for good or evil; whereas it can do little good to a bad book and little harm to a good one. The complaints seem to come chiefly from the writers of fiction, and it is quite true that reviewers of that

class of literature are not often of a high class. The latest joined of the staff are put on for that duty; the young dogs are 'blooded' on the novels. Their contributions to criticism would hardly be of much importance save for the belief many people attach to whatever appears in print. Strange to say there are no more superstitious folks as regards this matter than journalists themselves. They have been 'through the mill,' they know all the ropes that move her ladyship the Press, but they retain a mysterious respect for 'pretty Fanny's ways' that is quite touching in its simplicity. Used as they are to type they never get 'case' hardened. I have known a journalist speak quite gravely of an essay upon some great genius about whom everybody has made up their minds, though he knew it was written by some one who knew nothing about the subject, simply because it appeared in a periodical of good standing. Nothing can be more ridiculous than this fetish, but if it influences the journalist, how much more must it affect the novelist!

It is not to be disputed that a favourable review may assist a young author in 'bringing him on' (like early asparagus), and there are critics who have the intelligence to recognise merit and the courage to express their opinions; but the ordinary reviewer, who is also more bent upon doing himself justice than his author, is 'funky' of bestowing praise where it has not yet been given, and finds detraction much more easy work. This is the real *casus belli* which the young author has with the reviewer. As for the old and established author, it may still heighten his pulses to be praised, but it makes no difference to his literary circulation. Those who like him read him, however he is depreciated by the critics, and those who do not like him will not be induced to read him by the most eulogistic recommendations. Upon the whole, therefore, I do not think the authors' grievance is a very grave one, and if a writer is so sensitive as to be made miserable for more than twelve hours by an unfavourable review, it seems to me that he has mistaken his profession. An author of eminence

once told me that his wretchedness arising from this source endured with him precisely for a week, until the next issue of the peccant periodical, when it pitched into somebody else.

Another matter which is much debated in connection with literary affairs is whether a writer is ever justified in bringing out a book at his own expense. Of course the publisher is the proper person to take the risks if you can find one; but suppose the book is a volume of poems? If Milton, junior, should bring the MS. of a new 'Paradise Lost' in his pocket, and nothing else, to Paternoster Row, in manuscript it would remain. No publisher, therefore, I need hardly say, defrayed the expenses of *my* little volume of verse, the production of which, however, I have never regretted: its social profits were very considerable, though its financial ones were *nil*. For intelligent society is just what a young man of character is most in need of and finds it most difficult to get. His usual difficulty is that he can find no one to sympathise with his ambition, or share his tastes; indolent and

pleasure-loving, as are most of his class, he fritters his time away in amusements, which in future life he cannot easily dispense with, even if he does not become a confirmed idler; above all, he acquires no sense of comparison, and takes for wit what is merely flippancy, and for humour what is only the possession of high spirits. In later life he generally becomes a citizen of Bohemia, which he believes to be the greatest Republic in the world, though it is merely a metropolitan district.

From this fate, as I believe, the publication of my little volume saved me, by introducing me to a higher sphere of companionship than was to be found in ordinary undergraduate life. The days when a College fellow meant a don have long departed, and even in my time there were many men —at all events at Trinity—whose tastes were not restricted to academic pursuits, but who were in closer touch with the modern world of letters than any I had yet met with. Indeed, up to that date I had only met with one man in any way connected with literature, Thomas Noel, a very hermit as

regarded any knowledge of his literary brethren, and who was so little known himself that his pathetic poem 'The Pauper's Drive' was for years attributed to Thomas Hood. He was a bookworm of the legitimate type, and a great student of Elizabethan literature. Boy as I was, I was the means of making him known to Miss Mitford, of whom he became a constant correspondent, and who introduced his poems to the public in her 'Recollections of a Literary Life.' A childless widower, he lived alone, in a picturesque but secluded residence, and though one of the gentlest and most affectionate of men was shunned by his neighbours, for the heinous offence, as I always understood, of having buried the only child with whom he had been blessed in his garden instead of the churchyard. In these days it would have been considered, at the worst, but an eccentric act of affection.

Indeed, after a long life, during which there have been many changes in public opinion, there is nothing, as it seems to me, which has altered more than the liberty which I now see accorded to private

judgment in matters connected with the grave, and beyond it, over which society—who nevertheless took far less interest in them than at present—used to claim the most absolute jurisdiction. If a man went to chapel instead of church, it was almost thought, as our parish clerk in Berkshire always expressed it in the Creed, that 'he dissented into hell, and if he went neither to church nor chapel, he was of course an atheist.

My Cambridge friends, of the elder sort, though most of them belonged to the clergy, were free from these prejudices, and freed me from them.

Though I had been by no means brought up 'in the strictest sect of the Pharisees,' unless fox-hunting folks can be so described, yet my ideas upon spiritual matters were of the narrowest. There were some old Roman Catholic gentry in our neighbourhood whom we used often to visit, but it was certainly long after childhood that I regarded them, not indeed with the horror of a good Protestant, but with a certain awe. In one particularly kind and genial family I was as a boy a constant visitor, but

I could never think of them as of other friends, and regarded their very beautiful private chapel—especially towards the gloaming—in anything but a religious light. From their great library, full of illuminated missals and marvellous records of the old faith, I snatched a fearful joy, and when the kind, plump priest, who used to play bowls with me on their green, chanced to come in and ask me with his placid smile what I was reading, I thought of the Grand Inquisitor and perspired freely.

I find it the most difficult of all efforts of memory to recall those feelings now; they seem as far away as the Dark Ages, which is indeed their proper *habitat*, and separated from me, not by a lifetime, but by æons of time. Since then I have known men of all creeds (some of them, as it still strikes me, very queer ones), but the longer I live the more I am convinced that Belief, however goodly the seed, is not to be compared in importance with its fruit, Behaviour.

It is not to be supposed, however, that the friends of whom I speak were Freethinkers of the

vulgar sort; but they 'fought the spectres of the mind and laid them' without the assistance of holy water. It was new to me to hear questions of 'dogmatic theology' debated, especially by persons so much 'at their ease in Zion,' but it was intensely interesting. The discussions were not without their mixture of humour, but of a very different sort from the flippancy with which such subjects are often treated by that portion of the undergraduate world which is not 'serious.' To think, without fear or scoff, is a lesson which most young men are much in need of; and to do this was now taught me. I had friends of my own year and time too, dearer and nearer than these, and with gifts as great though as yet undeveloped, and some of them, I am thankful to say, death has not yet taken away from me. Indeed, if I were to sum up the advantages of a University education in a word, it would be its opportunities for making friendships. Unlike those of our school time, they have root and bear transplantation, and year by year they increase though they cannot multiply. As to the education itself,

it is best and shortest to say that I was incapable of profiting by it, and only 'just escaped from disgracing myself,' as the then Master of Trinity used to put it, by taking an ordinary degree.

I had been for some time engaged to be married, and had also, which was not quite so agreeable to me, undertaken to 'go into the Church.' Literature, it was thought, was not a good profession to marry upon, and to judge by the profits it had yet produced me, it was certainly not. As an initial step to my becoming a divine, it was, however, necessary to pass 'the Voluntary'—a theological examination in my case very inappropriately named—and at the brink of this I, so to speak, shied. I overheard two friends discussing the matter. 'He has no "call,"' observed the more serious of the two. 'He *has* a "call,"' returned the other, 'but it is in the opposite direction.' The observation was an injurious one as regarded the literary profession, but its personal application was so far true that I doubted my fitness for the ministry. It is true I had once preached an extem-

pore sermon, followed by a 'collection,' for two poor persons (one of them the preacher), but that success had not convinced me of my suitability for the priestly office; it was not that 'it was not good enough,' but that '*I* was not good enough,' and in that moral conviction I turned my back upon 'the Voluntary,' and the Church of England lost a divine.

During even my undergraduate days I was constantly attempting, with the perseverance of a terrier watching at a rat hole, to enrich the periodical literature of my country. When I hear a judge say to a prisoner, 'If you had used only half the intelligence you possess in the pursuit of some useful and honourable calling,' &c., I always think of the hundreds of young persons who are always attempting to get into print. It is the same sort of instinct that actuates the habitual criminal, but when the judge adds, 'you would have been successful' (i.e. in the calling) I think he makes a mistake. The saying that a good chess-player is a good mathematician spoilt is a similar error. Human

intelligence, and especially where it is considerable, has a tendency to be special, to run in a groove; and with regard to the aspirants after a literary life who have come in my way, though the vast majority of them have known bad fortune, the most capable ones did succeed, and in all probability would not have done so in any other calling.

Moreover, even when they do not succeed, some of them never give up the idea that they ought to do so. Indeed, the chronic rejected contributor has often so 'good a conceit of himself' as is not to be expressed except in his own words. Here are a couple of genuine letters embalmed in an editor's album :—

'Dear Sir,—Being a student of poetry, and a member of a notorious Literary Association, I want you to embrace in your respected organ a poem of mine. It is a poem of a high and sustained type, and would be greatly suited to your organ. I have appeared in other periodicals and have four years'

labour to recommend me to you. I feel sure you cannot do better than accept me as a regular contributor to your organ, which I know you will do, when you perceive the stamp and quality of my work, and the prolific power of my mind. I have drunk deep at the stream of literature, and been fascinated by the Greek grandeur of literary workmanship. I have lately studied the Sonnet, in the perfect Italian style, and have Sonnets which you would greatly appreciate. When will you take this poem I have referred to, and what is your price, if I become a regular contributor? for unlike most writers I have an originality of expression which is astonishing, and its originality is full of, and bathed in, beauty of thought-expression. I love to wander in the clime sublime, and pick all the finest, and most Heaven-reflecting, of the flowers of thought. Kindly reply.'

A writer of this kind is not easily persuaded that he has mistaken his profession. He is too self-confident to be angry at rejection. Self-confi-

dence, however, may exist with an honest indignation. The second gentleman kicks against the pricks: —

'SIR,—As one of those that declined to accept my "Essay on the Ancient State of Literature," I call upon you for the second and last time to peruse it. If, after careful studying the article, you remain unshaken in your determination to deny me or my fellow-victims justice, and basely to sacrifice the sacred cause of literature to your own sordid cupidity, I have no more to say, for reproaches are idle. And hopelessly callous as you are, I must for the future leave you to the conscience of which you have such a plentiful lack.'

The despotism of editors is not so arbitrary as it used to be. My memory does not go back to the fear in which the 'Quarterly,' 'so savage and slaughterly,' used to be held; one would have supposed it took its name from its quartering as well as executing its victims. In my time nobody cared much for the attacks of the heavier reviews,

partly, perhaps, because they were generally belated, and did not bear down upon authors till their reputation had been established; but the power of the weekly organs of literature was still considerable. The then editor of the 'Athenæum,' Hepworth Dixon, was greatly feared by the small fry of literature, and not much liked by the large fry. It is well known that Thackeray had objections to his daughter becoming an authoress, from the apprehension of what Dixon might write of her work. I remember as a young man, when speaking rather gushingly of the kindness I had received from editors in Dickens' presence, he observed with a droll look that he concluded I had not yet made the acquaintance of Hepworth Dixon. I had met him, however, at dinner, and had had rather a humorous experience of him. I was sitting next to a great Eastern scholar, who had told me quite as much as I wanted to hear of Assyria, and was still going on, when he was suddenly interrupted by the host, who, in a tone of conciliatory reproof, observed, 'Professor So-and-So, silence, if you

please, Mr. Hepworth Dixon is about to say something.' I forget what he said, but the rout of the Assyrian was complete, and amused me exceedingly.

Before I took my degree I had paid my first visit to the Lake Country, and it made a great impression on me. I had been brought up in the South, and had never beheld a mountain, much more such an assemblage of them as is to be seen at the Head of Windermere. It is the fashion among people who travel with Cook's tickets to Switzerland to sneer at the Lake Hills, but the fact is that the elevation from which their big brothers of the Continent are viewed is so much greater that they do not loom so much more largely in proportion, nor make the difference between hill and plain so much more pronounced. It is only in a few cases, such as the Jungfrau, where the mountain springs up on a sudden (like the mountains in the 'comparative heights' of the school geographies), that the contrast is so very marked; in the case, for instance, of Mont Blanc,

its head is lost in its high shoulders. At all events, when I visited Switzerland after having seen the English fells, the peculiar effect of mountains on a denizen of the valley was not as striking as when I first saw the Langdale Pikes. It must, however, be confessed that I love the Lake district as a faithful husband who loves his wife upon his golden wedding day no less than when she was his bride. From first to last it has been the locality most dear to me, quite independently of its associations, though they, too, have been of the most attractive kind. It was there that I first made the acquaintance of persons it would have been a stroke of good fortune to know anywhere—Miss Martineau, Matthew Arnold and his brother William, Allingham and Clough, the poets, and others—but who, met amid such scenes of beauty and far from the moil and toil of town, were seen at their best.

I visited the district, while an undergraduate, with companions of another but not less genial kind, for I spent part of a long vacation there more than once with some of my College contemporaries.

We did not 'paint' the district 'red,' which would have been an inappropriate colour, but we made matters lively there. We were always fixed on some wild expedition or another, and carried it out whatever was the weather, and in that locality it is generally wet. Never shall I forget that pouring day in which we made the Honister Crag round from Keswick on horseback. An intelligent guide had taught us how to keep our cigars alight even in tempest by holding the lighted end inside our mouths; it was very convenient, if a little suffocating, but it made us present rather a demoniacal appearance to the beholder.

More for the fun of the thing, I fear, than for love of the picturesque, we resolved to see the sunrise from some mountain top. Fairfield was the favoured one, and with infinite pains a tent was taken up there and pitched for the night. This was lit by four gigantic carriage lamps, and save that, like all tents, it was always too hot when it was not too cold, was a tolerable shelter so long as it stood. But as the night grew on a wind arose

such as destroyed the tents of the children of Job, and treated us even worse, for ours came down as we were intent on our cards, and with it the four lamps, whereby some of the party were burnt rather severely before they were extricated, since the flapping canvas drowned their cries. It must have been, I think, after this adventure that the following lines were written, which I find in a note-book of that epoch; they were evidently the 'moral' of a narrative poem :—

> But why your poetical people go
> To such very great heights, and sometimes in the snow,
> T see what they've just left behind down below,
> I really can't tell, for I really don't know.

It did not snow that night, but it rained in torrents, and anything more forlorn than our appearance when morning dawned it is difficult to imagine; on the other hand, nobody could see us six inches away, for it was a thick fog, and I need not say we never saw the sunrise.

On another occasion, with native assistance, we dragged up a well-furnished luncheon basket to the summit of Helvellyn, when, by some infernal

mismanagement, it escaped from our hands and was precipitated down the height of Catch-it-who-can, or some such name. Nobody could catch it of course. The fate of a very large plum cake, the pride of our landlady, was particularly distressing; it escaped from the companionship of the other things in the basket and took a tour of its own, making great leaps and bounds till, after one gigantic somersault, it broke into a thousand pieces.

As a rule, I do not like mountains, except to look at. The tourist's notion that Heaven must be 'a Switzerland all downhill' strikes no sympathetic chord within me; coming down, to my mind, is only less objectionable than going up, inasmuch as it does not last so long.

In the first year of my marriage I spent the winter in Ambleside. By that time I knew the Lake Country thoroughly well, but only in its summer dress. To see it put on its winter garb, from the white cap on the summit of the green hill that marks "the first snow on the fell" to the vast

snow-shroud over vale and mountain, was a glorious experience; yet how seldom is it taken advantage of, though within the reach of so many! That on a frosty morning one can leave London and the same night behold the skaters upon Rydal Lake by moonlight is an idea that never occurs to anyone; yet no transformation scene ever beheld on the stage can be more complete. It is veritable fairy land, with such accessories in isle and rock and snow, and in the echoes from the everlasting hills, as no manager, however enterprising, could supply. It is no wonder that, of all the splendours of his mountain home, Wordsworth dwells upon it as its crowning glory.

In those days Ambleside was a very primitive spot as compared with its modern aspect, and I remember that in the butcher's shop the joints bespoken by the inhabitants were marked with their names to prevent them being inadvertently disposed of to others—Mr. Jones's leg, Mr. Robinson's heart, and other customers' limbs.

The success—as I have some reason to think it

—of my little volume of verse encouraged me, like another person but slightly connected with literature, to 'drop into poetry' for a season. I wrote some 'Ballads from English History,' which were published by Harrison Ainsworth in 'Bentley's Miscellany;' looking back at them at this great distance of time, and perhaps because of it, I seem to recognise some merit in them. 'The Death of Cromwell,' from which I venture to reprint a verse or two, was perhaps the best of them.[1]

There is never much difficulty in getting moderately good poems published in certain periodicals if it is distinctly understood that no payment is expected for them. But, indeed, the sums I got for my prose contributions at this time were often so infinitesimal that they might, so far, have almost been poetry. One or two of these compositions found their way into respectable channels such as 'Household Words' and 'Chambers's Journal,'

[1] Upon reconsideration I spare my readers; that is one temptation overcome, at all events; and I also remember that I reprinted the poem in *Married beneath Him.*

and were of course duly remunerated; but the majority of them appeared in obscure periodicals, all of which are dead. This, however, did not prevent the descendant of one of their proprietors attempting, a quarter of a century afterwards, to lay hands upon some of these effusions. He wrote to say he had one or two of my early sketches in his possession which he thought I might like to have. At first I thought he was referring to the original MSS., which he might quite possibly have considered curious; but it turned out that they were four little stories, extending to about ten pages in all, of which 'he held the copyright.' The stories had been republished, with others, with the consent of the proprietors of the various periodicals, as was stated on the title-page. This he affected to know nothing about—had no recollection of any such permission having been granted (as, indeed, after four-and-twenty years, was likely) by the publisher of whom he was 'the direct representative,' and finished by demanding 'compensation.' I referred him to my legal adviser and heard no

more of him; but, on unearthing some early literary accounts, I found that the aggregate sum received for the four stories was 3*l.* 15*s.*! This is only an illustration of what every author of repute is liable to meet with from the too enterprising publisher. In dealing with Grub Street, which necessity compels when he is young and unknown, he cannot be too careful about the wording of its little agreements.

There are some dangers, on the other hand, against which no prudence can guard. There is the title of your first book, for example. You flatter yourself you have hit upon a good one, but whether it is a new one you can never be certain. The institution of Stationers' Hall, like the existence of snakes and mosquitoes, may be (who knows?) of advantage to somebody, but not to the author. The books are catalogued under their writers' names (which you don't know), instead of by their titles; it is, therefore, impossible to discover whether your title has been used before or not. But when your book is published you receive this information with

a claim for damages. The enterprising publisher again steps in. He has produced a work, many years ago, which fell still-born from the press, but is now going to realise something; it was published under the very title you fondly imagined you had invented, and though any confusion that could possibly arise in consequence must be to his advantage, he, too, requires 'compensation.' The case is a particularly hard one, since it is obvious that the name was chosen for its apparent novelty; if one 'hit upon' 'Vanity Fair' or 'Martin Chuzzlewit,' it would be a different matter. But though there is no justice in the claim, there is law upon its side, and the poor author suffers. My first mishap of this kind was brought home to me by the proprietor of the serial in which a certain novel of mine was appearing. 'The coincidence might have been a very serious trouble to you,' he said—'injunction in Chancery and so on—but I have settled the whole thing for you for five-and-twenty pounds.' He forgot to say that the enterprising publisher had, in the first instance, made his claim upon *him*, and

that he had disposed of the affair in this satisfactory manner at my expense.

'The myrtle and ivy of sweet two-and-twenty, says the poet of passion, 'are worth all your laurels, however so plenty,' and there is no doubt his lordship was right, only one does not discover the fact till one is much older. Now I reflect upon it, I not only ought to have been, but was, exceedingly happy at the age he mentions. At four-and-twenty I was happier still, for I had married one of the prettiest and (as was subsequently proved) the best of wives; we were living, or rather lodging, in my favourite haunt the Lake district, and I had seriously taken up my favourite pursuit of literature. It was an idyllic life we spent at Rydal Cottage, under the shadow of Nab Scar, and lulled by the music of the beck that flowed at the garden foot.

We had little to live upon, but sufficient for our simple needs; I have always shrunk from the cold touch of poverty, and am thankful to say I have never felt it. Wealthy—nor indeed what is called 'well off'—I have never been. I am not

philosopher enough to consider this an advantage, but what has been borne in upon me a thousand times is the conviction that the notion that society —by which I mean really good society—is influenced in the least degree to our discredit because one has 'small means' is the merest delusion. There are 'carriage people,' of course, that is people who are proud of their carriages and never forget that they possess them, but I am speaking of people really worth knowing, of whatever rank. A man of character, with independence of spirit, is not only never patronised, but no attempt is made to do it.

Of course, if he chooses to undergo the humiliation, it is open to him, but it is like going on all fours when the ceiling is of the ordinary height. I had always a dislike, I think, to this mode of locomotion, but what would have preserved me from it at all events was my devotion to comfort. Swelldom would never have suited me because of its inconveniences. I resemble the beggar who, when reproached for his useless life, replied, 'Ah, sir, but you don't know how idle I am.' I am not idle, far

from it, but I am indolent beyond belief; in my poorest days I would always rather have given a man a shilling than have obliged him by crossing the road; trouble of all kinds is hateful to me; the details of business—even my own business—are intolerable; but let me have my own poor way and don't 'fash me' with matters of fashion and convention, and I am the most contented soul alive. To this apparently selfish attitude I believe I owe much of the happiness of my life; it has saved me from a hundred temptations; been the means of escape from many a gilded chain, and even caused many virtues to be attributed to me, such as modesty, which, as a matter of fact, I do not possess. I am afraid I have never experienced that sense of inferiority as regards any human being that is so wholesome, we are told, to entertain in the presence of our betters. And I have not found that my betters resented it. The fact is there is nothing which persons of intelligence welcome so much (because it is so rare) as naturalness, and though in my case it may have arisen

from a low motive – devotion to personal comfort—natural I have always been.

Naturalness, however, has this defect, that when persisted in, it renders artificiality and affectation in others much more hateful to us than they really deserve to be, and even the polish of good manners and the dignity inseparable from a great position to be 'suspect.' Every advantage, however, has its drawbacks, among which is a too attentive study of human nature. It became my profession to study my fellow-creatures, and the consequence has been a most unwelcome recognition of defects in persons both near and dear to me. These are among the things which it is much better not to know, nor is it to be supposed that I spared myself—at least as interesting a subject of vivisection as other people—but got at the back of my own mind with perfect ease, and was exceedingly sorry to have taken advantage of the opportunity. Some people are much better than they seem to be to the world at large, while others are considerably worse, and I do not require to be told—and should consider it very

officious of anyone to tell me—to which of those classes I belong.

There is probably no error more widespread and well established than the idea that we do not—or rather cannot—know ourselves; we can if we choose, or if, as in my case, we are compelled, make our own acquaintance perfectly well. Of course we may be wilfully blind, but is it possible that anyone would take an interest in such a matter equal to our own, or have one tithe of the opportunities of observation? As to seeing ourselves as others see us, that is a very different thing, though that too a good deal depends upon whether we present ourselves to our fellow-creatures full face or edgeways.

I do not suppose that the literary profession has a greater crop of disappointments than any other, but he who is born to follow it feels them more than other people; he is more easily depressed (though also more easily exhilarated), and sees no silver lining behind the cloud. This is especially to be regretted, since there is no calling in which so many misfortunes turn out to be blessings in dis-

guise. The chief one of them is that which we foolishly deplore the most, namely the impossibility, when we are very young, of getting our effusions published at all, a thing which in our later years we have always reason to be thankful for; moreover, what we congratulate ourselves upon often turns out anything but an advantage, as when we are in too great a hurry to dispose of our copyrights, or for the sake of appearing in print bind ourselves perhaps for years to some far-seeing publisher.

My first great literary disappointment was connected with a magazine called 'The Picture'; it was so called because it had a frontispiece printed in colours, the first experiment, so far as I know, of that description It was undertaken by a man of substance, and the editor he appointed had the good sense to perceive merit in my youthful productions. He arranged with me for a series of articles, and no one who has not been in the same position can understand the satisfaction that conferred upon me; for what the neophyte in literature desires above all things is permanency of employ-

ment: to be on 'the staff' of some periodical or another with a heavenly vision perhaps, far away in the clouds, of an editorship for its crowning glory. Now, such was the malice of fate that the excellent and substantial individual who started 'The Picture' was killed by a railway accident on the very day when the first number of his magazine appeared. I never knew him personally, but I am confident he had no more genuine mourner than myself; for with him the whole undertaking perished, and I was left with half a dozen articles ready written for that luckless periodical on my hands. I have always been, so to speak, half a dozen articles ahead with everything, not from forethought and prudence so much as from nervousness and the fear of not being ready for what was required of me. I doubt if there has been any more dependable contributor as regards punctuality since the art of printing was invented.

How I became possessed of this virtue I do not remember. At one time I could scarcely have had it, since when a cadet at the Military Academy at

Woolwich I came back from town one Saturday after tattoo, and my leave (which I loved) was stopped for the rest of the term. Perhaps it was this lesson that cured me. At all events I have always guarded myself as well as I could against misfortune; my motto was 'No risks,' as the goose said when she stopped under the entrance to the barn. It is commonly said, by persons who are never in time for anything, that being *before* the time is not punctuality, but the great Duke of Wellington ascribed all his success in life to being 'always a quarter of an hour too early.' This prudence or punctuality was once of immense service to one very dear to me. When my wife and I were a young married couple, we chose, among other picturesque places, for a summer home, Lynmouth; and one day we went with a little party for a picnic in one of the neighbouring bays. It was arranged that some male friends with myself were to return over the cliffs, and my wife and another lady, with her father and brother, by the sands. We were rowed to the spot in a boat, which after

the picnic took back the plates and dishes, and the last words the boatman said were, 'Be sure, ladies, you start at four o'clock at latest, for the tide will come in fast, and this is the only place which has a path up the cliff.'

Somehow or other, notwithstanding his warning words, and also some from myself, the sand-party delayed, and we were glad to see them safe into the next bay. We had no idea that the ease with which they accomplished it was to be their ruin, for the margin seemed so great that they saw no reason for excessive haste, and doubtless loitered. If they had walked ever so fast, however, it is doubtful whether they would have got home in safety; for the tide came up very fast, and they only got into the second bay by wading, that is, the gentlemen waded and carried the ladies on their shoulders. In a few minutes the way they had come was barred by the sea, and they saw only too plainly that to pass round the next point was absolutely impossible. The cliffs were insurmountable and the tide tearing in like a mill-race.

I believe that they all behaved very well, though in all human probability they knew their fate was sealed. They passed a terrible quarter of an hour, and then round the farther point came into view the boat, and, though wet to the skin, they managed to get into her. 'It was well,' said the boatman, 'that the young gentleman had paid him to wait,' and indeed but for my 'fidgetiness'—as it had been called up to that date—they would all four have been drowned. Of course this virtue may be carried too far. I had a female relative more 'fidgety' than myself, and on one occasion it was important she should go to Exeter by the Flying Dutchman. She arrived at Paddington long before her time, as she thought, and yet found her train at the platform, at which she was very triumphant. But presently she found herself on a siding. She asked the guard for an explanation, and for the first time discovered that she was in a 'Parliamentary,' which started half an hour before the express, and was shunted to let it go by. On that occasion the laugh was with the unpunctual members of the family.

Some authors can only write as it were on compulsion, when they hear the press thundering behind them, but even the most distant sound of it would have been sufficient to paralyse my energies. I was always afraid of being ill, and unable to perform my promised task, and to have written against time would have made me ill at once. But what was the use of this prudential conduct as regarded 'The Picture'? The six articles I had written expressly for it seemed suddenly to have become waste-paper, as the sequins in the Arabian story turn to dead leaves. The articles, indeed, were short ones, but here was a permanent engagement gone for ever. It seemed a terrible blow, but as it turned out was by no means a matter to be regretted. The executors of the owner of the periodical paid me half price for the articles bespoken. I afterwards enlarged them all (for in those days I was very extravagant with incident and they could afford expansion), and received five times as much for them as had been originally promised; and a few months afterwards

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I was a regular contributor to 'Household Words,' a periodical of a much better class than 'The Picture' was ever likely to have been. I mention this circumstance for the benefit and encouragement of the junior bar of letters, and it is but an example out of many in my literary life where what seemed to be most unfortunate has turned out to be a cause of rejoicing.

People talk of an 'idea' for the most part with ridicule; but in imaginative literature at least it is very valuable, and, like most things that are precious, hard to find. The most curious thing about it is, however, the difficulty of keeping it; in this respect it excels quicksilver. One would think that when a thing of this kind struck you, you would not be likely to forget it; it seems at the time that there is little else so well worth remembering, and that while Memory holds her seat, this conception, so brilliant and original, will cling to it. At the moment, perhaps—for an idea may strike you at any time—you may not be in a position to set down the germ of it. Some fellow asks you a question

about the weather, or the Habeas Corpus Act, and in one instant it has flown for ever. All that it leaves behind it is the sense of the magnitude of your loss. It is like a fish getting off your hook of which you have hardly seen anything and will never see anything more, but which you are conscious was the very largest fish that ever *was* seen. Therefore I earnestly warn all young gentlemen of the pen, if they do happen to have an idea, to set it down in black and white at once, if it is but on the cuff of their shirt.

Before I had my hands full of work I kept up a pretty frequent correspondence with persons more or less my contemporaries and of similar tastes and pursuits. Some of these afterwards attained a considerable eminence in letters. One of them was Calverley, whom all the world now knows as one of our best parodists and translators. Notwithstanding the genial character of his work, his animal spirits were not high till he took pen in hand, when they at once began to mount. In writing to me of a visit he had been making to the New Forest he

says: 'I must confide to you two pieces of English which charmed me mightily. (I.) I asked a young lady if a dog which accompanied her was her dog or one of her sister's; and she said, "Oh, it's all our dog," and then asked me if that was correct English. I said I thought it admirable English and a boon to our language I added that I would ask the great Skeat, but whatever he said I should retain my belief.

'(II.) Another young lady, an enthusiastic horsewoman, watching a friend of hers with much admiration as she rode away, remarked to me, quite as a natural phrase to use (it was the first time I had even seen her), "I like to see a girl look comfee on her gee."'

A bearded friend of ours, Joseph W., was the occasion of a parody from Calverley's pen, 'John Anderson, my Jo.' Here is his introduction to the composition:—

'Sir,—As a literary man you will be interested in the discovery I have recently made of the subjoined poem. It was written across the MS. (which

I happen to possess) of one of Burns's published letters, and unquestionably in his hand. We have here no doubt the authentic version of what has been hitherto only seen in a garbled form. The absurdity, you will observe, is satisfactorily got rid of (a true Calverley touch) of persistently calling a man "Jo" whose name was "John"'—

> Jo Crediton, my Jo, Jo,
> When we were first acquaint
> Your chops were neatly shaven,
> Your bonny brow was brent;
> Now you're a trifle bauld, Jo,
> Atop, but all below
> You're hairy as a Hieland cow,
> Jo Crediton, my Jo.

Another literary friend of my early days was Walter Thornbury, a well-known writer, but because he was a very prolific one not so well thought of, perhaps, as he deserved to be. He turned his hand to everything, which the public, too mindful, perhaps, of the proverb about Jack of all Trades, always resents. He wrote, however, some vigorous and stirring verses, and knew how to tell an old-world story well. Curiously enough, though in his

books, so far as I know, there was no grain of humour; he wrote amusing letters, though in a worse hand than my own. Next to Dean Stanley and Lord Houghton, his handwriting was the least legible I ever knew, and in days when the typewriter had not been discovered this made a serious difference in his printer's account. Here is a letter introducing a doubtless illegible MS. to my notice when I was a very young editor indeed:—

'My dear Sultan,—Behold one of the most humble, grateful, and devoted of your slaves. Deign to cast your one remaining eye with favour on the 13,000 gold kincots, the 7,000 peacocks, and the 1,400 red tailed apes I now offer before your scintillating throne, and placing your crescent slipper on the nape of my neck, do not—*do* not exclaim (as is so often your wont), "A bowstring for this dog!" or better, "Quick, Mesrcur, thy sabre!"'

It was very difficult for me to decline the MS. of a contributor of this kind. The two classes of my fellow-creatures who have been always most

attractive to me are the kind and the humorous; indeed, the latter are generally (though I regret to say not always) also the former. I have a very large experience of clever people, and I hope I know how to appreciate them, but cleverness without humour, and especially without kindness, is from a social point of view, at least, a poor thing. You can illuminate your house with electricity, but neither with sheet nor forked lightning.

The fault of barristers is their cleverness; it often causes them to pretend to cynicism, when they are in reality quite as good-natured as other people; they are afraid of being thought sentimental and capable of being taken in, which nevertheless sometimes happens even in spite of their precautions. Upon the whole, and for a 'scratch' companion, I prefer a doctor to a man of any other calling. He may not be very good as a conversationalist, but he is rarely very bad, like a cheroot. He has had a genuine experience of life, and has seen down to the depths of it; a sick man does not attempt to deceive his doctor, or put the best face

on his character as he does with a priest. Moreover, what is very unusual, your doctor knows more about you, professionally at all events, than you know about yourself. He does not tell you about it, it is true; not a word of that aneurism you carry about with you, and which will some day kill you in half a minute; but your consciousness that he may possess such knowledge makes him interesting. The best suggestions I have had made to me for plots for my novels have come from doctors, to whom I have also had cause to be grateful for many things.

A humorous reminiscence occurs to me in this connection. An old friend of mine once told me that he was about to entertain a party entirely composed of this profession. 'Let there be one exception, and ask *me*,' I said, and accordingly I was invited as Dr. Payn. After dinner the conversation took a professional turn, and it made my hair stand on end to hear the exceeding frankness with which the art of healing was discussed. Drugs, it seemed, on the whole did more harm than good,

and if Nature were let alone altogether, it was probable that more people would be left alive in the world. One old gentleman, who sat beside me, had alone forborne to join in this astounding conversation, and, emboldened by his silence, I privately confessed to him that I was but a layman, and inquired whether these things were true.

'Certainly not,' he replied. 'It is only a way we doctors have of talking when we are alone together. Leaving things to Nature means letting them go to the Devil. When a man is ill, what Nature is really driving at is to kill him. That is the long and the short of the matter.'

And this amazed me even more than what his *confrères* had said.

Sir C. L. was once on his holiday in Italy many years ago, when he got a line by messenger from his old friend Lord A., then residing near Milan: 'I know, my dear L., you do not exercise your profession in your vacation, but for the sake of old times I think you will come and see me. I am very ill, dying I believe, and nobody can find out

what is the matter with me.' The good physician of course obeyed the summons. He found his lordship living in a lovely villa, in charge of a beautiful young woman, who spoke of his state of health with tears. He was certainly very ill, apparently dying of some irritant poison, though all the doctor's skill could not detect its nature. He had his suspicions, however, as to who administered it. One morning, when the lady was out on her usual ride, he took the liberty to go into her apartments and overhaul them thoroughly. On a shelf in the dressing-room he found a very delicate chopping instrument with infinitesimal bits of horsehair on it. Then he knew all about it. This horsehair was put into his lordship's food, and acted as a constant irritant. Sir C. went straight to him, and inquired whether he had made his will.

'Yes.'

'You have left this young lady a good deal of money, I conclude?'

'Yes, I have. But why do you ask?'

'Does she know it?'

'Yes, I have told her, poor dear.'

'Well, that poor dear is the person who is compassing your death'—and he produced the chopping machine. His lordship, after much argument, was convinced and deeply affected.

'Well,' said Sir C., 'let me send for a policeman.'

'A policeman! Certainly not. She has behaved ill, I grant, but she is an angel.'

'Let me at all events pack the angel off.'

'What, send the poor dear away! Impossible! I could not live without her. I am sure she will be very penitent and sorry.'

Sir C. had a long and most dramatic interview with her and found her very sorry—to have been found out. She promised not to do it again.

'If you do,' said Sir C., 'you will be hung, that I promise you. I shall keep my eye on Lord A., and if I hear of his illness or his death I will come, if it be a thousand miles, to investigate it, and if you have tried to murder him a second time I will not spare you.'

But the old lord and the young lady lived on together (as in the fairy tales) very happily ever afterwards. In my novel 'Halves,' I have used this incident, though of course under wholly different circumstances.

This was, as I may be allowed to say since it was not my own, a very good plot, and it was not the only one for which I have been indebted to other people. As a rule, what one's friends consider as 'a capital subject for a novel,' and make one a present of with the air of bestowing something very valuable indeed, is absolutely useless; but I have known exceptions, and the plot of the 'Confidential Agent,' as I have elsewhere said, was dreamt by a friend. My own dreams have been unfruitful, though there was a ghost story, 'The Prince,' which came to me lately during slumber, and frightened me far more than its readers. One plot I purchased. When I say plot, of course I mean some striking incident, which may not occupy ten lines, or two minutes in the telling, but which takes the fancy by storm.

If it does not do that, it is valueless to the story-teller.

'By Proxy' was simply evolved from the idea of a man not performing a promise to his dead friend. It is, I believe, my most popular novel; but though the local colouring has been pronounced accurate enough by residents in China, a great authority once informed me that though the populace would have torn the author of the sacrilege described to pieces, the mandarins would have taken no notice of it. When the villainy of the chief character was denounced as exaggerated and out of nature, on one occasion I remember my dear old friend, Sir Francis Doyle, observed, 'That is rubbish; I know Pennycuick quite well.' And so did I, though it was not the same person.

Sir Francis was one of the most delightful old men I have ever known, and the kindest. How many times, weak and ill as he then was, has he climbed up my office stairs to tell me something that he knew would give me pleasure, or make me smile. He was a humorist and also a great lover

of horses (as we all know from his fine poem on the Leger) which is, in my experience, a rather unusual combination. His last letter to me, too personal to be printed here, is very touching and characteristic. 'How false,' he says, 'is the notion that when we grow old, troubles no longer affect us as they used to do. I do not care for prolonged life; and death, after having lived twenty-four years longer than Shakespeare, ought not to be dreaded.'

Another class of letters, which delicacy forbids me to publish, are those which I have received in my capacity as editor from persons of both sexes to whom I have been able to extend a friendly hand. It cost me little, and has been repaid ten times over by their appreciation of it. If, as we are told, it is the part of a generous nature to magnify slight benefits, those who adopt the literary calling must indeed be graciously endowed. Some of these folks have been successful, and some have not, but they have equally remained my friends; in the former case, when they have

surpassed me in fame and fortune, I may honestly say that no touch of jealousy has mingled with my congratulations and in the latter they have felt that I did my best for them and forbore to abuse the plaintiff's attorney. Some acts of theirs have been so touching, and have cast such a pleasant light on human nature, that (since it involves no breach of confidence) I cannot resist the pleasure of recalling them.

A correspondent of mine, to whom literature had been its own reward (and not a great one even at that), emigrated with his wife and family to California. I had never seen him, and never expected to hear from him again, for he had given up the pen for the pickaxe, and become a miner. When he had been six months away he sent me a registered letter, with quite a large lump of gold in it. 'When I left England,' he said, 'I privately promised myself to send you the first nugget I should find, and here it is.' My wife wears it, but not as a jewel; it seems to us set in something

(though invisible) more beautiful and precious than pearls or diamonds.

Curiously enough I received from the same far-off land, and also from a miner, another gift to which I attach an equal value. He had been thrown from his mule and became incapacitated from working, so had turned the natural gift he possessed for painting to that art. So great it was indeed, that though he had never received a lesson, the first picture (water colour) he sent to the Academy on his coming to England was accepted; but at the time in question he was well content to keep the wolf from his cabin door by selling his sketches to the miners. As a novel of mine had chanced to please him, when he was prostrated by his accident, he sent me a charming picture for illustration of a scene I had portrayed in it; and that, too, I think, if it could be environed with the feelings that moved him to such an act, would become it better than the finest frame.

Another gift, or rather the offer of it, for I was fortunately able to stop it *in transitu*, as it would

have been obtaining goods under false pretences, has also a pretty history. In a certain American periodical I had been writing some articles on birds' eggs, and for professional purposes had described myself as a crippled boy, whose only pleasure was in collecting them. The editor wrote to me that a fine collection of American eggs had been sent to his care, the property of an American boy (quite unknown to him), who, being himself in health, felt that they would give me a greater pleasure than he took in them himself.

The strangest letter I ever received was from a person of no particular eminence, whom I should have thought incapable of exciting even so mild an emotion as surprise. I had known him from early years, but of late had seen very little of him. Thoroughly high principled, he was, however, rather conventional in his opinions, and, to say truth, somewhat uninteresting. Still, old association has its influence, and I was really glad to see Alfred Hunter's handwriting upon the envelope placed upon my breakfast table one morning. What he

could have to write to me about, however, I could not conceive:

'Ilex Park, Yorkshire.

'My dear Friend,—It is a very long time since we met, but I have not forgotten you. You have made your way in the world, and I do not doubt that you have deserved to do so; yet I dare say, to use rather a vulgar expression, you have had more praise than pudding. At all events, money must be a consideration to you as to every one else, and therefore I make no apology for what follows, and it gives me sincere pleasure to have the opportunity of putting you on what our sporting friends when we were young and foolish used to call (I think) "a good thing." The idea is my own, and has been divulged to nobody. With you alone, the friend of my youth, I wish to share it. It is nothing less than a grand scheme of becoming rich beyond the dreams of avarice (as Dr. Johnson puts it) by black-mailing. You and I know a number of persons of position, all of whom, of course, have committed themselves in some way or other; some perhaps

criminally, if so, so much the better. Let us worm ourselves into their confidence and extort hush-money. What do you say to starting a Limited Company (only you and me) for this purpose?'

Now Alfred Hunter never made a joke in his life, and if this was his first joke some excuse might be made for it; but there was nothing funny about the letter except its extreme seriousness and the quotations, both of which were characteristic of him.

I did not feel at all inclined to reply to it, but called next day upon a cousin of his in the City, with whom I had a slight acquaintance. 'How is Alfred Hunter?' I said, after a little talk. 'Very well, the last time I heard of him,' he replied, I thought a little gravely. 'And prosperous I hope,' said I. 'He writes to me from some part in Yorkshire.' 'Good Heavens! don't you know?' inquired my companion. 'It's a lunatic asylum; poor Alfred has been in confinement these five years.'

I am aware that these reflections are dreadfully digressive, but that I cannot help. If I do not write down what happens to come into my mind at once, it is gone for ever; 'and no great loss' perhaps will be the reflection of the reader. When a man comes to the end of his life, and flatters himself that he is giving his fellow-creatures the experience of it, it often happens that he is only giving them the lees of the glass. What I was going to say some time ago, *à propos* of letters from literary persons, was that in these latter days they are from a literary point of view seldom worth reading, chiefly from their brevity. To paraphrase a famous line, 'their worst they give, their best they keep'—for printing purposes. The demand for their productions from the public is too great and pressing to admit of their favouring private friends beyond a genial word or two. Two generations ago this was not the case. Dickens, indeed, wrote letters as good as any of his books, and comparatively long ones, but he had a boundless store of ideas, and could afford to bestow them in

all directions and as it were with both hands. George Eliot also wrote long letters to her correspondents—the dullest in the language; there are some unpublished ones lying before me, artificial, pompous, would-be philosophical, but unspeakably dull. She had no gift of letter-writing at all. It is amazing to compare her efforts (for they are full of effort) in this way with the ease and charm of an authoress like Miss Mitford, for example, with whom of course in other intellectual respects there can be no comparison; but Miss Mitford belonged to a literary generation which did write letters. Miss Martineau, too, wrote good ones, though of a very different sort. I have scores of the letters of both in my desk, only alike in that they are full of home kindness. Both those maiden ladies were essentially motherly women.

We hear a great deal about the difficulty young authors find in getting a hearing, of the 'close boroughs' which all magazines of standing are sure to be, and of 'favouritism' in literature generally. This is a very old superstition, and at one

time may have had some foundation in fact; but the thing complained of has not existed to any extent worth speaking of for a couple of generations. I can witness to its absence at least for forty years. Literary cliques there have, of course, always been, and will be to the end of time; mutual admiration societies very amusing to the old stager, but which offend the neophyte by their exclusiveness, and the great discouragement which they think it their duty to afford to all applicants for their assistance; but there is no more favouritism in periodical literature than there is sentiment in business. What an editor wants is a good article, and if he takes bad ones out of friendship, he soon finds cause to repent it. He does not need advice, and still less objurgation upon this point; like Mr. Pickwick when he fell through the ice, and was entreated by Mr. Winkle to keep himself up for *his* sake, he follows the precept for his own. As regards myself—though thanks to my early acquaintance with Miss Mitford, as stated in my 'Literary Recollections,' I was personally intro-

duced to several persons of eminence in Literature —it was no sort of use to me in getting employment. I knew no editor, nor anyone who had influence with editors; and though I have received great kindness from many of them, as regards advice, do not consider myself under obligations to them as regards acceptance: it would be a bad compliment indeed both to them and to me were it otherwise.

A dear friend to whom I used to speak of this matter because it interested him, though he knew nothing about it, being a theologian pure and simple, was the late Dean Burgon. He was a very old friend of my family, and was so good as to entertain a regard for me, far beyond my deserts, especially when judged from his own standpoint. He was one of those 'whose eyes grow tender over drowning flies,' yet believe in the harshest dogmas. His biographers, in extolling him as a theologian, have quite lost sight of his affectionate drollery, which had a charm of its own I have seen in no other man. His last letter to me, written within a few days of his death, and beginning 'My dear

Jimmy,' is full of it. I have often described, though I believe not in print, a delightful scene in which he refused to christen a male child 'Venus.' It was when he was officiating as curate at West Ilsley in Berkshire. The people there were very primitive, and I remember how the poor clerk got into hot water for giving out Rousseau's Dream to the parish choir; to him it was a mere piece of music innocent as Jacob's dream, but not so to Burgon. 'How dare you mention that horrid man and his nasty dream within these sacred walls, sir?' But the christening business was a still finer incident. 'Vanus? I suppose you mean Venus. Do you imagine I am going to call any Christian child after that abandoned female, and least of all a male child?'

The father of the infant urged that he only wished to name it after his grandfather.

'Your grandfather!' cried Burgon. 'I don't believe it. Where *is* your grandfather?' He was produced: a poor old soul of eighty or so, bent double, and certainly not looking in the least like

the goddess in question. 'Do you mean to tell me, sir, that any clergyman ever christened you "Vanus," as you call it?'

'Well, no, sir; I was christened Sylvanus, but they always calls me "Vanus."'

How dear old Burgon enjoyed it! His tempest of indignation was stilled at once; and his queer face, always the gravest of the grave during an ecclesiastical ceremonial, puckered into an irresistible smile. He was the most natural man, despite his dogmatic opinions, I ever knew, and though he exceedingly magnified his priestly office, without the slightest affectation or pomposity, he loved children dearly, and was never tired of playing with them. There is a story told of him after he became a dignitary of the Church, which, if it is not true, deserves to be so. Returning from his cathedral in full canonicals, he saw one of his juvenile playmates, as he thought, approaching him, and hiding behind a corner he came out with a cheerful 'Boo.' It turned out to be a little old widow lady, who very nearly had a fit on the spot, and

could not be persuaded for many days that his reverence had not gone mad.

A well-known public favourite once gave an entertainment at Chichester, and being still in his bed the next morning at the hotel, was called upon by the Dean (a perfect stranger to him), who congratulated him upon his talents, and gave him several useful wrinkles for his future performances. Dean Burgon wrote the lives of 'twelve good men,' but I refuse to believe that any one of them could have been a purer, better, or more unselfish man than himself.

CHAPTER III

THERE is nothing that brings the conviction home to a man that he is growing old more than the occasional reminiscence of some incident which, from its nature, could hardly have happened within a couple of generations. People were coarser then than they are now, and more outright in their repartees. I remember as a boy a Colonel B. at Portsmouth, who was very kind to me in his way, but of a violent and, indeed, uncontrollable temper. He had been in his youth a notorious fire-eater, and he had passed his latter years in tropic climes, which had not cooled his disposition. So long had he been away that he knew little of the modern usages of society, and appeared at a great ball in the neighbourhood of the town in white trousers. This had been the evening attire of officers in

uniform in the West Indies, where he had last hailed from, but in England it was as unknown as the dodo. There were probably two hundred of his brother officers in the ball-room, and he alone in 'ducks.' The hostess was a friend of my family and had kindly sent me an invitation, though I was much too young for such an entertainment, and I never shall forget the excitement caused by the Colonel's appearance. Feeling the uniqueness of his costume, he sought me out, perhaps as being the only person present unconscious of its incongruity. Every one cast an oblique look at his ducks and hid an involuntary smile; but what took all my attention was the Colonel's face, as he gazed about him wanting to shoot somebody: its scarlet was ample compensation for the absence of colour in his legs. The way in which he swore under his breath—though *I* could hear him—was something terrible, and had all the attraction of novelty. However, no blood was spilt, and he presently got away, but the story was all over the town. The next day a noble earl of royal descent came down

to Portsmouth and was entertained by the military at luncheon. He knew nothing of Colonel B.'s temper, and how it had been exasperated the night before, or he would certainly not have selected him as the recipient of a rudeness; but his lordship was given to express himself coarsely, and without regard to the feeling of others. The Colonel was hacking at a chicken of which the guest of the day had expressed a wish to partake, and not being accustomed to wait, got impatient, and thus delivered himself: 'It was a saying of my royal father, Colonel B., that good carving showed the gentleman.' 'Was it, indeed?' returned the Colonel, all the indignation which had been bottled up for twelve hours suddenly finding vent; 'and what was the opinion of your royal mother upon that subject?' It was not perhaps a very witty repartee, but it was an exceedingly effective one, and made a great sensation. But the whole scene, as I heard it described, seems to belong to the days of the Regency.

I have my full share of the weakness of human

nature, but I do not remember that I was ever shy; and perhaps my freedom from this attribute prevents my quite appreciating the torture of those who suffer from this calamity. Still, I can feel for them, and two incidents still remain in my mind which, at the time, almost drew tears from my eyes.

A clergyman of my acquaintance, Mr. S., was a perfect victim to this mental disease, and he had one of those pink-and-white complexions which betray its existence by a modest blush on the very slightest occasion. He lived a solitary life as a curate in an out-of-the-way part of the country, till in an evil hour a scion of a noble house persuaded him to become 'warming-pan' for him in a rich living in Devonshire which he himself was not at present old enough to hold. Until lodgings could be procured for him, S. was invited to stay at the family seat, which, as generally happened, was full of company. Poor S. felt himself there like a fish out of water, and a very small fish. A bevy of fair and fashionable young ladies made

existence intolerable to him by occasionally addressing him in public; by a young lady in private I do not think that S. had ever been addressed. He used to go into the neighbouring town daily to procure articles of furniture for his lodgings, and the lady of the house asked him at the breakfast-table one morning what his plans were for the day. 'Well,' he said, turning red as a rose, 'I am going into Exeter to buy a pair of drawers.' I am sorry to say for the manners of the aristocracy that this little mistake of a 'pair' for a 'chest' caused a shout of inextinguishable laughter, and poor S.'s face remained for a week less like a rose than a peony.

When instituted in his new office he went round the parish to make acquaintance with his congregation. It was very wet weather, and he got almost swamped in the Devonshire lanes, but he persisted in his duty. On one occasion he called on an honest farmer of the good old school, who asked him how he liked Devonshire. 'Oh, I like it exceedingly,' said S.; 'but I find it rather muddy. I notice, however,' pointing to the farmer's boot,

'that you take very sensible precautions to keep yourself out of the wet.' 'Well, you see, Mr. S., I've got a club-foot.' S. waited to hear no more, but fled instantly from the house, and only after much solicitation could he be induced to remain in the living. The farmer never understood why he had run away, and thought he had been taken suddenly ill.

What he suffered, however, was nothing to what I subsequently suffered in consequence of S.'s mishap. I thought the story very humorous, and told it in my best manner at a large dinner-party at a house at which I had never dined before. During the narration I received a violent kick on the leg from my next neighbour, but thought it accidental. The tale was received in total silence, and it was some time before general conversation was resumed. 'That was a very amusing story,' whispered my neighbour. Being very angry at the want of appreciation shown to it, I put in quickly: 'But, you would say, deuced stupid people to tell it to.' 'No, my dear fellow, it isn't

that, but our host has a club-foot.' Then I knew what S. had suffered, and wished I could have run away as he did. In all such cases, however, the man who has inadvertently put his foot in it in this manner should comfort himself with the reflection that his own feelings are much more lacerated than those of the person on whose account he has been made wretched. He knows one has spoken in ignorance, and if he is a good fellow feels pity rather than anger.

It could only have been in accordance with the fitness of things if the circumstance that caused Mr. Decimus Green's retirement from the Church had happened to Mr. S. Mr. Green I knew; he could ride well, a gift not generally associated with shyness, but was as shy as a fawn. He had bought a high-mettled mare cheap, for whose legs a sea bath had been recommended, and though she could be taken to the water she could not be persuaded by the groom to enter it. Mr. Green thought he would do better than the groom, and when he took his own bath in the sea *in puris*

naturalibus resolved that the mare should take hers. She was brought down to him and he mounted her, but after a sharp struggle she turned short round, and before he could throw himself off, made straight for the little town of which he was (or rather thought he was) the perpetual curate.

He was not fastened to his steed, like Mazeppa; he was not a voluntary equestrian, like Lady Godiva; but he had not the presence of mind to throw himself off, and, like the other lady in the ballad, he had 'nodings on.' That day was the last day of his curacy.

Another true tale of a curate by no means shy, but who felt the sensation for once, and I have done with my illustrations of this weakness. He was a relative of my own, and had proper views of comfort and even luxury. I remember that even the pieces of linen on which he wiped his razors were frilled. He was a handsome, pleasant fellow, and more popular among the county families than country curates are wont to be. In return for their hospitality he resolved to give some of them

a little dinner. The viands were unexceptionable, and as it was winter time he even provided hot-water plates for his guests. His man, however, who was also his groom, had had little experience as a butler, and when the guests trooped down to dinner each found a hot-water plate on his or her chair. It was winter time, and the poor fellow had, from their conformation, mistaken the purpose for which these plates were intended; but it was a bad five minutes for a host who piqued himself on having everything perfect.

It is difficult in this world to always avoid being placed in a false position. H., a dear friend of mine, of great University reputation, was once staying with me in Edinburgh. His manners were most courteous to strangers, but he was very fastidious and particular. Walking down Princes Street one day a gentlemanly young fellow thus addressed him: 'Excuse me, sir, but I have never been in this town before, and though a Scotsman, do not know which is Scott's monument.' My friend told him, and finding him greedy of infor-

mation, like Dr. Johnson's young waterman, who was 'ready to give what he had' to know about the Golden Fleece, discoursed to him of various matters. Presently a police inspector stopped them, and inquired of H. 'whether he was aware that he was walking with the most notorious thief in Edinburgh.' Lord Byron tells us that the most gentlemanly young man he ever met in his life was a pickpocket, and H. always declared the same thing of this agreeable stranger.

H. was bursar of his college, but decided to leave Cambridge for the Bar, and arranged with C., the great conveyancer, to read with him. C., though so learned in the law, was ignorant of University matters. In speaking of his new pupil, he said what a really interesting and accomplished man he was; it was most satisfactory to see persons of that stamp (H. was senior classic) desirous of belonging to a learned profession; it was curious, too, that his talents had been recognised, for, bursar though he was, he had brought personal introductions with him from two of her Majesty's judges.

C. had got into his head that a bursar was a sort of butler.

The falsest position in which *I* ever saw any of my fellow-creatures was unhappily shared by myself. I once accompanied a great moral philosopher and a distinguished mathematician to a dinner at Greenwich. After the feast we strolled into the grounds of Greenwich Hospital to smoke our cigars; my companions, who had dined exceedingly well, were deep in a discussion upon 'Fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,' when it was rather vulgarly interrupted by a policeman. 'Now you ought to know that no smoking is allowed here, gents, so just you throw them cigars away.' My distinguished friends regarded the man in philosophic silence, and left me to argue with him. I pointed out to him that the building under which we sat was of solid stone, and not combustible by any number of lighted cigars; but the guardian of the law was deaf to reason, and we had to comply with his monstrous directions. We moved away, as we thought, well out of his beat, and in a more

retired part of the grounds lit fresh cigars, and the interrupted discussion about 'Fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute' was renewed. Then, all of a sudden, the same policeman put his helmeted head round the corner. 'Ah, you're at it again, are you? Well, now you will all three just come with me to the police office.' The philosopher and the mathematician were, in short, in custody, and so was I (but that was comparatively of no consequence). They walked quietly (it never came to the frog's march) to their doom, as though there had been no such thing as free will and foreknowledge in the world, but only fate. After a severe lecture from the sergeant in charge, we regained our liberty, but I am sure that my two companions (at all events) had never been in so false a position in their lives.

The most striking specimen of a false position was perhaps that in which a friend of mine, not unknown in the commercial world, found himself in his efforts to escape the jury list. He had evaded it for some time by the assistance of an

official in consideration of a certain douceur, but he had got tired of paying what had been in fact an annuity, and wanted the thing to be done with for good and all. 'For ten pounds,' said the official, 'I will guarantee that you shall never be troubled again;' and the money was paid. When the day came for his attendance at the court, my friend (John Jones, let me call him) could not resist the temptation of seeing how his money had been invested, and repaired to Westminster, where justice was then administered. He described the sensation of hearing 'John Jones' called out as rather peculiar; it was called out a second time, and he could hardly resist answering to his name; when it was called out a third time he felt quite eerie, and much more so at what took place in consequence. A person in deep mourning, and with a voice broken with emotion, exclaimed, 'John Jones is dead, my lord.' And his lordship, with a little reflected melancholy in his tone, observed, 'Poor fellow! scratch his name out.'

Another case of a gentleman finding himself in

a false position (though he had no idea of it) was that of Sir C. A., a constant attendant at the whist table of a country club. He had grown grey (or so he used to say, but afterwards discarded that form of words) in the service of his country, and had done so for some years, when one day he appeared at our club with hair as dark as the raven's wing.

Nobody remarked upon it, though of course everybody noticed it, and he actually was under the impression that his transformation had not been observed. 'Did you notice,' he said to a confidential friend after the rubber, 'anything different—as regards—ahem!—my hair?' 'Well, I see you have taken to a wig.' 'What! you saw that, did you? But you're a deuced observant fellow. You don't think anyone else saw it, eh?' 'Well, I am sure that Tom (the old card-room waiter) didn't, for he asked me what was the strange gentleman's name, that he might put it down in the book.'

When I look back upon my life immediately and for some years after my marriage it seems—or perhaps I should say it ought to have been—an

ideal one; I had enough for our needs, and whatever I made by my pen was an extra, and I delighted in my work as much as others in their play.

We became acquainted with the most picturesque parts of the country in the search for a residence, and when tired of it we went elsewhere.

> Youth, a breeze 'mid blossoms playing
> Where hope clung feeding like a bee,
> Both were mine; life went a-maying
> With youth, and love, and poesy.

It is only when we become old and ill, and 'one ceases to be eager' about anything, that we can estimate the truth and pathos of the poem that contains those lines. It pictures for us as no other poem does, save the 'Tears, Idle Tears' of Tennyson, that crown of sorrows, the remembrance of happier things. How pathetic is the writer's pretence of ignoring it:—

> O youth! for years full many and sweet
> 'Tis known that thou and I were one;
> I'll think it but a fond deceit,
> I cannot think that thou art gone.
>
> Thy vesper bell hath not yet tolled,
> And thou wert aye a masker bold.
> Life is but thought, so think I will
> That youth and I are housemates still.

How vain, however well meant, are the efforts to extol old age and the advantages of a protracted existence which only gives us a longer time for melancholy comparison! How destitute of consolation is the argument that we have had our day, and should now be content, among other things, to 'go wooing in our boys'—a thing that can never be done by proxy. I confess, however, I had my share (though not, I protest, what is termed in the play my 'whack') of the joys of youth, and especially as regards the pitching our tent at will in the greenest pastures. But as time went on and flocks and herds increased but slowly, and our family very fast, my face was turned towards that city which, from the time of Whittington, has always to sanguine natures seemed paved with gold. Then, instead of camping under the greenwood tree, we took lodgings in London.

Our first experience in this way was in strong contrast to the Arcadian bowers we had been accustomed to—a drawing-room floor in a genteel street running down into Hyde Park,

where, whatever else was wanting, I found 'copy' enough.

We had not been there many days when an altercation between our landlady—yellow as a guinea and dirty as a Scotch bank-note—and her milkman 'forced itself,' as Mrs. Cloppings said, 'upon my ear.'

'Everybody is getting out of patience with you and your artful ways,' he said. 'Your landlord is going to put in the bailiffs on Monday morning, and if he were not, I would do it myself. The milk you have had from me without payment for your lodgers is past belief: you might have bathed in it.'

This picture of toilet luxury in connection with this lady was even more appalling than the threat of legal proceedings. I concluded it, however, to be Eastern metaphor; but as to the bailiffs, I thought the statement only too likely to be solid fact. I therefore took such measures as were in my power for self-defence. It was on a Saturday that I received this warning, and Sunday I understood was a day of freedom from executions; but in those

days the law permitted the goods of a lodger (otherwise than his personal raiment) to be seized for rent, so I took what little property of value we possessed, in a portmanteau, and deposited it in friendly keeping. As it happened, there was no execution, but plenty of other dramatic incident. One day the landlady showed my wife the most beautiful collection of shawls and gowns, which she offered to her at half their value. In any case they would have been beyond her means, but what naturally astonished her was how this impecunious female had obtained possession of them. Her story was that she had been lady's maid in a fashionable family, and that her old mistress and her friends were wont to give her their new clothes to sell for ready money while their husbands paid the bills. This was not a pretty explanation, but the truth of the matter was a great deal worse. A few days afterwards, returning home unexpectedly, I found in my little smoking-room on the ground-floor a number of bags and boxes, which I afterwards discovered had been 'conveyed' from a neighbouring

railway station; and indeed it turned out that I had been so fortunate (from the 'copy' point of view) as to have taken lodgings at the principal receiving-house for stolen goods in that neighbourhood.

The first book of tales I ever published ('Stories and Sketches') contained one called 'Blobbs of Wadham,' the foundation of which is the accidental likeness of two strangers to one another. This was the case with another Trinity man, whom I had never seen, and myself. Not only was I often addressed by persons who took me for him, but people used to ask, *à propos* of nothing, whether I knew So-and-So. I remember making a considerable impression upon a chance passenger in a railway train on the Cambridge line, who was staring at me rather hard, by suddenly observing, 'No, sir, I do not know Mr. So-and-So.' It had been the very question he was going to ask me, but my anticipating it seemed to him so uncanny that he got out at the next station. Mr. Sherlock Holmes had not at that time been heard of. When I came to know my

double I saw but little resemblance between us except that we both wore an eyeglass; but I believe no one does see any likeness to himself in anybody, so true it is that after having beheld one's natural face in a glass one straightway forgets what manner of man he is. The exception was Narcissus, which proves the rule.

Another humorous incident on the same railway line was as follows:—I was travelling up to town with two undergraduate friends, A. and B., the former of whom was a particularly shy man. We wanted to play whist, but disliked dummy; and the only other man in the carriage was a very High Church clergyman, as we knew by what was then called his M.B. waistcoat. B., however, cut the cards and shuffled them, and looked at him appealingly; while A. murmured, 'Don't! don't! he will think we want to play the three-card trick.' We two, however, were resolute. At last it was agreed that we should draw lots who should ask him to play, and the lot fell upon poor A. I can see him now, pink and palpitating, as he made his

plaintive request. 'Well, of course,' said the parson, 'that is just what I have been waiting for.' And I remember that he won our money.

In those early days the three-card trick was not the national institution it has since become: the 'gentlemen of the road' at that time used the three thimbles. The Cambridge line was much infested by these persons till cleared of them by a well-known personage, whom I will call Mr. Hunt. He was a London money-lender of great disrepute, whom some of my young friends had dealings with, and perhaps he resented that the sovereigns, which ought by rights to have been his, found their way into these rascals' pockets. At all events he undertook the (to him) unusual *rôle* of the guardian of youth and public benefactor. Mr. H. was a tall and powerful man, but had the agile fingers of a conjurer, and thimble-rig was child's play to him. Attired richly with studs and chain, and with an agricultural cast of countenance, his entrance into their compartment was gladly welcomed by the three rogues. After a modest interval the thimbles

were produced, and he lost a pound or two; then, pretending to be 'pricked,' as the gamblers call it, he offered to bet five-and-twenty pounds that he would discover the pea. The money was staked on both sides and put on a vacant seat. Then Mr. Hunt said, after an apparently careful inspection, 'The pea is there,' and there it was under the thimble. Then he seized the bank-notes, crammed them into his pocket, and produced a life preserver, 'Whoever touches me,' he remarked, 'is as good as dead.' The three sharpers had the sense to perceive that he was in earnest, and they were also astonished and demoralised by what they had witnessed; for nobody knew better than themselves that there had been no pea. Mr. Hunt also knew it, and had brought one with him to supply the deficiency. They never troubled the Cambridge line again.

Mr. Hunt figures in one of my short stories called 'Amalek Dagon.' Perhaps the facts on which one or two of my fictions were founded may

have some interest. The first short story, or about the first, I ever wrote—a very short one, called 'Change for Gold'—was founded on a very curious circumstance in the life of Beckford, communicated to my informant by the old Duke of Hamilton. When Beckford had exhausted Art and Pleasure he had a morbid passion for new sensations, and found one by a strange accident in an intending suicide. He was a young man, with a wife and child, once in good circumstances, but reduced by poverty to great straits. He had come to the conclusion that his wife, whom he had married contrary to the wishes of her family, would be better provided for if he were out of the world; but, at all events, life had become intolerable to him. Beckford paid him a sum yearly, which placed them in comparative affluence, upon the understanding that he should disappear and never see them again. Twice a year he visited his patron to describe his feelings as a voluntary exile from home and kin, and afford him a study, as it were

of a human document. If I remember right, he eventually broke his word (which he ought never to have given) and escaped from this strange slavery.

'Blondel Parva' is a tale of life assurance, founded on some curious facts that took place in Edinburgh in the early part of the century. The clothes of a merchant of high repute were found on the shore of the Forth, and it was concluded that he was drowned. He was very popular, and his family, who were much attached to him, were greatly sympathised with; and the more so since they were left far worse provided for than had been supposed. He had, however, insured his life for a very large amount, which secured them competence. By help of this money and his own exertions, the eldest son in course of time amassed a large fortune. Many years afterwards two of the judges were walking across the North Bridge in Edinburgh when they were accosted by a beggar. One of them gave him something, and excused himself to the other for such injudicious charity on the ground 'that the old fellow was so like poor F.'

'My dear friend,' said the other gravely, 'I never forget a face. That was F. himself.'

And so it turned out. F. had pretended to commit suicide in order to save his family from ruin; and after years of voluntary exile, during which he suffered great privations, he had been unable to resist the temptation of once more beholding his children before he died. He had no intention of revealing himself to them, and fancied that no one else could recognise him, but he felt that the judge had done so, and therefore made himself known to them. He died at home a few weeks after his return: the money obtained from the life assurance office was repaid with interest, and the matter was hushed up. Curiously enough this very case was used as a plot by another novelist only a year or two ago; and the scene of it, no doubt by misadventure, actually laid where it had occurred, in Edinburgh.

'Carlyon's Year' is the story of a man who had only one year given him by the doctors in which to live. A friend tells me that it much

disappointed a sporting gentleman of his acquaintance who had been led to suppose from its title that it was the history of a Derby favourite.

'A Perfect Treasure' was taken from the story of the Nancy diamond; it was entrusted after the battle to a faithful servant, who fell among thieves, and, to secure its safety, swallowed it. It is probable that no family retainer has ever been regarded with such solicitude for the quarter of a century as he was. The first cheap edition of the work was brought out with a picture by Sir John Millais, the woodcut of which, I suppose, happened to be in the publisher's possession, and seemed to him to illustrate the subject ('A Perfect Treasure'), for it was a little baby in its mother's arms.

When I re-peruse the little story, 'How Jones got the Verse Medal,' I cannot resist the conviction that the original of that fortunate young person was Tennyson. I heard the tale while I was an undergraduate, and wrote the story before years had brought the sense of reverence; and it must be confessed that 'Timbuctoo' is a poem that does

not itself preclude levity. The examiners for the year (as I heard the tale) were three—the Vice-Chancellor, who had a great reputation but a violent temper, and did not write very well; a classical professor who knew no poetry that was not in a dead language; and a mathematical professor. It was agreed that each should signify by the letters 'g' and 'b' (for 'good' and 'bad') what he thought of the poems, and the Vice had the manuscripts first. When the mathematical professor got them he found 'Timbuctoo' scored all over with g's, and though he could not understand why, nor indeed the poem itself, did not think it worth while, as he afterwards said (though the fact was he was afraid), to ask the Vice his reasons; so he wrote 'g' on the poem also. The classical professor thought it rather funny that both his predecessors should admire so unintelligible a production; but, as he said, 'he did not care one iota about the matter,' and so wrote 'g' on it also; and as no other poem had three 'g's,' the prize was unanimously awarded to the author of 'Timbuctoo.'

After all was over, the three examiners happened to meet one day, and the Vice, in his absolute fashion, fell to abusing the other two for admiring the poem. They replied very naturally and with some indignation, that they should never have dreamt of admiring it if he himself had not scored it over with 'g's.' '"G's,"' he said, 'they were "q's," for queries, for I could not understand two consecutive lines of it.'

'The Blankshire Thicket' was Maidenhead thicket, near which I lived in my youth. It had an almost unequalled reputation for highway robbers. A farmer (I think his name was Cannon) was stopped one night as he drove home from Reading market and robbed by two footpads. He was a powerful and courageous man, but as he had no weapon he had to give up his money-bag. As he drove along, full of bitter rage, he suddenly remembered that under the seat of his gig was a reaping-hook that he had taken to Reading to be mended. Then he drove on to the thicket (which is, in fact, a common), and making a long detour

came into the road again half a mile or so on the Reading side of where he had been stopped before. The footpads, as he anticipated, were still at their post, waiting for more prey, and of course they took the farmer for a fresh victim. So amazed, however, were they to see their old friend again that they 'hardly knew where they was,' as he expressed it, when he leapt out of the gig and laid about him with his cutlass (as they doubtless thought it) with such effect that one was left for dead upon the road and the other took to flight. Upon the former the good man found his money-bag, and drove home rejoicing. He was a local hero for many a day, and none the less because it was whispered that he had found other moneys upon the person of his prostrate foe, and kept them as the spoils of war.

'The Calderton Arms' alluded to in the same story was the 'Orkney Arms' (or Skindles), now so well known to all the river-loving public. The story goes that early in the century the landlord was a strong Radical, and could command a dozen

votes; but his prosperity had a sad drawback in it in the person of his only son, a good-for-naught. During a certain Blankshire election a Tory solicitor was staying at the inn, and had occasion to go to London for the sinews of war. His gig was stopped on his way back on Hounslow Heath by a gentleman of the road.

'I have no money,' said the lawyer, with professional readiness, 'but here is my watch and chain.'

'You have a thousand pounds in gold in a box under the seat,' was the unexpected reply; 'throw back the apron.'

The lawyer obeyed, but as the horseman stooped down to take the box the lawyer knocked the pistol out of his hand and drove off at full gallop. He had a very quick-going mare, and before the highwayman could find his weapon, which had fallen into some furze, was beyond pursuit.

The next morning the lawyer sent for the landlord. 'Yesterday,' he said, 'I was stopped on Hounslow Heath. The man had a mask on, but I

recognised him by his voice, which I can swear to. I knew him as well as he knew me. You had better speak to your son about it, and then we will resume our conversation.'

The landlord was quite innocent of his son's intended crime, but he had reason to believe him capable of it. He went out with a heavy heart, and when he came back his face showed it. 'Well,' he said, with a sort of calm despair, 'what steps do you intend to take, sir, in this matter?'

'None to hurt an old friend, you may be sure,' answered the lawyer; 'only those twelve votes you boasted about must be given to our side instead of yours.' Which was accordingly arranged.

The story of 'Double Gloucester,' in ridicule of the absurd custom, now fallen into disuse, of naming parts of the same street, and even opposite sides of it, by the points of the compass, had an actual illustration in my own experience. We lived at that time in Gloucester Crescent, Hyde Park; in a line with it was Gloucester Crescent North. A friend from the country, who had come

up to act as godmother to one of our children, arrived at the right number, but in the wrong Crescent, where lived two maiden ladies. She was ushered into the drawing-room, where they received her a little stiffly. She took them for London friends of the family, and that, like herself, they were a little early for the ceremony. By way of conversation she observed, 'Well, and how is the dear baby?' They protested, with a natural indignation, that there was nothing of the kind on the premises.

On another occasion, when we gave a juvenile party, a totally unknown little boy made his appearance—and it was a very fine one—among the other guests. His attire was splendid, both as regarded colour and texture, and he was not the least dismayed at finding himself among strangers. His nurse had left him at the wrong party, but it is impossible he could have made himself more at home had he been at the right one. He did not know his own name or address, but referred all inquiries to 'Nursey.' In consideration of his

position he was allowed to do exactly what he liked, and he dominated the whole company in the most absolute fashion. We should have more appreciated the humour of the situation if we had been quite sure of his being called for, which did not happen till long after the other little guests had departed, so that we had more than a *mauvais quart d'heure* upon his account. The idea of any permanent addition to our family at that time was a serious one. Upon explaining to his attendant that a mistake had been made, she was so good as to say that if her little master had enjoyed himself it mattered nothing.

'The Savan Triumphant' was an experience of my cousin, Frank Buckland, who himself related it to me. He belonged to a fishing club on the Thames, which held its meetings once a week, and the chairman for the evening was the one who had caught the heaviest fish. On one occasion a Mr. Jones was the fortunate individual; it was the first time that he had earned the honour, and he was very proud of it, though his prize fish had only

been a barbel. One of the members of the club was unable to stay to dinner, and asked Jones for the fish to take home with him, as it was not to form part of the *menu*. He consented, though rather unwillingly, and nothing was heard of the matter till the next meeting, when Buckland chanced to be present.

'A curious thing happened about that barbel which Jones gave me last Saturday,' observed its recipient; 'it had swallowed a little pike.'

'You will not make me swallow *that*,' observed Buckland confidently. 'A barbel could not do it; its conformation forbids it.'

'You may theorise as you like,' returned the other, but I must be allowed to believe the evidence of my senses. I saw the jack taken out of the barbel with my own eyes.'

'I *don't believe* it,' said Buckland.

The conversation, in fact, was growing very warm when Jones broke in with, 'Don't quarrel, gentlemen; you are both of you in the right. The fact is I was so afraid that somebody might catch

a heavier fish than I that I poked the little jack down the barbel's throat with my fishing-rod, to make him weigh more.'

'An Arcadian Revenge,' which reads farcically enough, had its origin not only in real life, but in high life, the principal, though passive, actor in it being a member of the Royal Family. It was, of course, an object of ambition to his county neighbours to get him to visit them, in which some succeeded and some did not. The A.'s were among the fortunate ones, and, after the most ingenious intrigues, got him to promise to attend one of their lawn-tennis parties. The B.'s, who were their nearest neighbours, were less ingenious, or had less good luck, and he declined their overtures, which naturally made them furious with the A.'s. It happened that though both families had very extensive gardens, their tennis-grounds were contiguous, and, indeed, only separated by an iron fence. When the party to meet His Royal Highness (to which the B.'s had not been asked) adjourned from the luncheon-table to play their game, they

found the B.'s servants hanging the clothes from the wash on lines in the neighbouring tennis-ground —a spectacle which reduced the A.'s from the highest state of social exultation they had ever enjoyed down to the lowest condition of despondency and shame. His Royal Highness, though short-tempered, was good-natured, and pretended not to see the various articles of underclothing, which an unfortunately high wind made unusually conspicuous; but when one of them escaped from its pegs and settled, like a gigantic bird, on the guest of the afternoon, he used—like the mother of Lady Vere de Vere's friend—some words that 'scarce were fit for her' (or anybody else) 'to hear,' and the party broke up in great disorder.

It is very seldom that in biographies any mention is made of a class of persons who have, nevertheless, a good deal to do with our lives, and have the power to a considerable extent of making them pleasant or otherwise—namely, our domestic servants. In these humble memoirs at least they shall find a place.

Folks talk of faithful servants nowadays as if the breed had died out years ago. This is not my experience, and I have had a large one. It is not quite true, perhaps, that good masters and mistresses make good servants, or at least not so true as it used to be, because in these days there is a desire for independence and a dislike of subordination in the lower classes which of old did not exist; but if employers behave themselves as they should do, and show consideration and sympathy, both parties meet in general with their reward. The first cook we ever had had been a kitchenmaid in a private hotel which had been our home for some months. In a small way she was a born artiste as regards culinary matters, but that was not her highest merit: she was the most loyal and faithful creature it is possible to imagine, of extraordinary simplicity, and yet of an amazing cunning which was always put in practice for our advantage. An example of the former of these attributes was given in the first few months of our acquaintance. An esteemed bachelor friend, C., had been staying with

us for a few days, and on the morning of his departure Mary came into the drawing-room and deposited five shillings in my wife's lap. She was not only the cook, but could turn her hand to anything, and was as well known to all our guests as the parlourmaid, who, with a nurse, made up at that time all our little household; still, she had never before figured as a source of income, and the sight of those five shillings astonished their recipient a good deal. It turned out that in the hotel she had come from it was understood that any 'vails' she received should become the property of her employer, and C. having given her five shillings, she had hastened to lay that donation at the feet of her mistress. It was quite difficult to persuade her that they were her personal perquisites.

On one occasion our kitchen chimney took fire, and almost before the crowd could collect she had got on the roof and stopped the conflagration with a wet blanket. When the firemen arrived with their engine she met them with her sweetest smile (she was not a plain cook in any sense, but a very

pretty one), and assured them that in our house, at least, no accident of the kind they were in search of had taken place.

'Why on earth did you do that, Mary?' inquired her mistress.

'Why because, ma'am,' she replied, not without some contempt in her tone, 'if I had not sent them somewheres else they would have charged you a guinea.' Of course she was morally in the wrong, but in the service of her master and mistress (bless her) she had no scruples.

When she felt herself to have been wronged, she was the most resolute of women. It was her custom in the summer time in London to go twice a week, as early as five o'clock or so, to Covent Garden, and to come back in a cart laden with every sort of commodity of the best and cheapest for the maintenance of our household. One morning she came back almost immediately in a violent passion, with an eloquent account of her having been chucked under the chin and kissed by a policeman in the Edgware Road. Master, she

said, would of course see her righted, but until that was done not a stroke of work would she put her hand to.

Master did not like the job, but he knew his Mary too well to attempt any opposition, and to Marylebone Police Office he took his steps.

The inspector was very civil, but thought the charge unfounded; suggested even that the young woman might be hysterical (fancy our Mary hysterical!) and recommended that the matter should be dropped. I quite agreed with him, but assured him such a course was impossible. 'Very good,' he said, 'I'll have the men brigaded at eight o'clock to-night, and the young woman can come and look at them and identify the offender—if she can.'

At eight o'clock Mary and I went to the station. There were about fifty policemen in two lines, waiting to receive her like a guard of honour: there was a space between them, so that she might walk in front of each, and read 'between the lines,' if she could, for the right man. The force giggled a little, but even that did not disturb our heroic

cook. She marched slowly up one line and down the other, said she was 'not quite certain,' and asked leave to do it again. This time she stopped, like a learned pig at a letter, exactly opposite to one 'intelligent officer,' scrutinised him closely, and then observed, 'That is the man.' And it *was* the man. It was admitted that he had been on duty in the Edgware Road at the time in question, and we were promised that he should be duly punished for his offence.

The end of Mary, so far as we were concerned, was sad and mysterious. She left us after fourteen years, at the request of her aged parents, and though we wrote to her and to them again and again, we received no reply of any sort.

We have not always had such nice cooks as Mary—few people have—though on the whole we have been fortunate with them; but on one occasion we had a *chef* of the first class, though only for a short time. We had been a good deal troubled about cooks at that time; had had a succession of them, each worse than the other as

regards the art she professed. We had been obliged to keep them for a month, and had only not been poisoned. At last I said, 'Never will we engage a cook again till she can show how she can cook.' They had all assured us that they could send up dinners 'fit for a prince;' perhaps they did, but, if so, princes must be easily satisfied. This resolution of mine very much thinned the ranks of the candidates who applied for the situation. They said it was a humiliating proposal, and one which no one who respected herself would submit to. If they said they could cook, not to believe it was throwing doubt on a lady's statement. At last one came who positively smiled at having to prove her words; she had the best credentials as to her culinary capacities, and assured us that they fell short of her merits. I so far believed her as to ask some people to dinner who really knew what a good dinner was (a knowledge, by-the-by, only possessed by a very few persons), and it was arranged that she was to have a guinea for her services. The guests arrived, and, being old friends,

were informed of the circumstances, so they resolved themselves into a sort of committee of taste. The dinner was a perfect success; indeed, I have never sat down to a better one. We congratulated ourselves on having at last discovered a perfect treasure, who would live with us as long as life would last, though such excellent cooking would probably ensure exceptional longevity. When the feast was over and the guests departed, I told my man that I would pay the cook her guinea with my own hands, that I might compliment her upon her genius. 'I think you had better not do that, sir,' he replied. 'Perhaps to-morrow morning she may be better.' 'Better? she could not be better!' (I was still thinking of her only as regarded her art.) 'What is the matter with her?'

'She is not in a fit state, sir, to take her wages.'

From what I knew of my man I felt from this description that she must be in a parlous state indeed.

'Do you mean to say she is intoxicated?'

'No, sir, intoxicated is not the word; she is lying dead drunk on the kitchen floor.'

It was quite true, for I went down and looked at her. She had had a quantity of stout, and then a bottle of port wine, while she had been sending up the dinner; she said that 'constant support' was necessary to her during that responsible duty. And she had done her duty to the very last—a particular kind of roe on toast, of which I have still a grateful remembrance. Then this great artiste succumbed. She was really a *cordon bleu*, but so constituted that she had never held any situation beyond a month, during which (except in February) she had been drunk from thirty to thirty-one days: a brilliant genius, but with this little failing, like Sheridan.

Menservants are generally liked better by their masters than their mistresses; they are said to have the faculty of getting the length of their foot; and such is the innate selfishness of the male sex that so long as a man is personally well attended to he does not much mind how other folks are neglected. I am really afraid there is some truth in this, for though I have had some excellent men-

servants in my time, it is certain they have not all been so good as I thought they were. Jackson, a most grave and dignified character, was an example of this. He never unbent even to me, but he treated me at all times with kindly condescension. He had received his orders from another quarter to 'look after' his master, and he did so on one occasion with unnecessary particularity, even to the extent of removing my hat from my head when I came indoors. Of course, I did not speak of it to *him*—if you had known Jackson you would have understood the impossibility of such a course—but I mentioned it elsewhere.

'Ah, you have found him out at last, have you?' was the enigmatical reply.

What could it mean? A few days afterwards, on the occasion of our giving a little dinner-party, I found out what it meant. On handing me the champagne, Jackson whispered confidentially in my ear, 'Will you have some sham?' and the moment afterwards saw by my face that he had betrayed himself to a too-confiding master. Still, I could

not but admire his subsequent behaviour—the conduct of a general who, though beaten, resolves not to be disgraced. He no longer trusted himself to wait at table, but remained at the sideboard, supporting himself slightly on his elbow, like a classical statue, and issuing his orders to the parlourmaid. Of course, the next morning he had to go. And here again he exhibited a fine sagacity, for, knowing that no worse could happen to him, he saw no reason why he should not make himself as happy as possible with the very cause of his undoing, and accordingly came up for his wages in a very advanced state of intoxication. He was still stately, but for a little lurch in his gait, and looked like a bishop threatened with sea sickness.

'There are your wages,' I said coldly—'your month's wages—though you don't deserve them.'

He had a slip of paper in his hand, the contents of which he compared with shaking fingers with the amount.

'No, you don't!' he said, with his superior smile and even a touch of his old pitying con-

descension. 'I wants my *board* wages, and I don't go till I gets 'em.'

Then he backed against the wall and leant against it—the six feet four of him—a fixture, as it seemed, for life. A policeman was sent for, but informed me that his duties must be confined to seeing that no unnecessary violence was used in expelling Jackson from the premises. Had not two undergraduate friends of the family happened to be in the house at the time he would probably have been with us now, but with the utmost willingness they seized the intoxicated Colossus by the shoulders and ran him into the street in half a minute. It is a great mistake to suppose (even though the police force refuse their assistance) that force is no remedy. Still, I was sorry for Jackson; his end—the being run out with such celerity—became him less than any portion of his sublime existence.

Strange customs have come and gone in my time, and social alterations of various kinds. At one time there was a craze for the revival of a certain custom of our ancestors in connection with

hospitality. It had been resuscitated many years before by the 'Young England' party, and was once more dug up from its grave, like other

> Usages thoroughly worn out,
> The souls of them fumed forth, the hearts of them torn out.

This was the turning the junior members of the family into table-waiters, to do more honour to the guests. This was done in some cases amongst people of the highest rank, and very distressing and embarrassing the guests felt it to be when the Lady Gwendoline or the Lady Ermengarde came round with the *entrées*. On one occasion, at the house of an eminent man, I noticed that when the dinner was announced his pretty daughter of sixteen had no cavalier allotted to her, and remarked to her on the wickedness of the omission.

'Oh, I am not going to dine,' she said, with a smile and a blush, 'but only to wait upon you.'

She evidently did not enjoy her office (which made the meal very unpleasant to me), but performed it with much grace and dexterity. Her brother, a public-school boy a year younger,

resented the arrangement exceedingly; with a hand deep in one pocket and a dish in the other, he came lolling up with his 'sweetbread' and 'croquettes' as though he wished they might choke us, and I heartily forgave him for the aspiration. In some countries the custom is almost universal, but it certainly does not suit the English public-school boy.

Before the Crimean War there was a certain military club in London composed of very ancient members indeed; only a few colonels even were in it, and those of advanced age; the rest were generals and field-marshals. There is a legend that the hall-porter declined to admit a member who ran up the steps; such a thing was not only unparalleled, but seemed to him to be impossible. After peace was proclaimed there was an influx of comparatively young colonels into the club, whose advent was much resented by the aborigines. One of them told me of his adventures the first day. He was reading the *Times* on one of the standing newspaper-frames, when all of a sudden he found

himself reading the *Morning Post*. An old general who wished to change his paper had quietly turned the thing round. My friend was not remarkable for good temper, and I asked him what he did under circumstances which even to my civilian mind seemed calculated to provoke a breach of the peace.

'Well,' he said, 'I got a good grip of the stand with both hands, and then whirled it round about forty revolutions to the second. The way in which that ancient veteran staggered back and fell into an armchair was a caution.'

The new arrivals were denied the first read of the evening papers. My colonel said, 'They were snatched away from us, sir.' However, in the reading-room one afternoon he found only a dozen warriors, all with one arm, except one, who had but one leg. He said to himself 'I shall get my paper to-day.' But when the servant came in with them the veteran with one leg took the whole of them from him, tucked them under his arm like a sheaf, and gave one to each of his friends, like a patent distributing-machine.

It was in this club that two members of the committee swore to blackball a candidate who had committed the heinous offence of being under sixty years of age. When they quitted town for the summer, they left word with the secretary that they should be telegraphed for if Colonel B.'s election came on. And in due time he did telegraph for them; one came from Dublin and one from Cornwall to keep B. out of the club. As it happened he got in, and the two veterans were wild with fury and the secretary.

'Indeed, gentlemen,' said the poor fellow, 'I couldn't help it. Indeed, but for you he would not have got in; for had you not put in an appearance on the committee there would not have been a quorum.'

It is curious that, while amateur acting is looked down upon, plays sometimes succeed in the drawing-room which fail in the theatre. This may be explained by the fact that the audience is more friendly; but in some cases the piece is really less well acted by the professionals. Wilkie Collins's

'Frozen Deep' was an example of this. When Charles Dickens and Company acted in it, it was a great success, but on the boards it was a failure. I sometimes fondly think that my poor play, 'The Substitute'—a small thing (in a mere couple of scenes), but my own—came under the same category. It was received in a private house, where it was acted well and carefully, with every mark of favour, but failed—and deserved to fail—upon the stage. It was there played very vulgarly, whereas it required very delicate treatment. The plot was, I believe, original. A rich old English bachelor, Mr. P., engages himself in Paris to a young lady of fashion, who jilts him on the wedding-day. He has written home describing her various accomplishments to his friends, and the disappointment is a very bitter one. Out of pique he at once marries the housemaid at the hotel, who has been very good to him. The fun consists in his introducing her at home as his original *fiancée*, and in her successful efforts to support the character, accomplishments and all. If it was not funny, I

don't know what fun is; and yet—well, no matter, the British stage was the loser, for

> I was so disgusted
> That I took and cussed it,
> And did not try again.

What was rather singular, I rewrote it as a story, which was popular enough, when half a dozen persons wrote to me to ask permission, on account of its dramatic character, to adapt it for the stage, where it had already run for six weeks (at the Court Theatre, but with a scratch company and in the off season) without attracting the least attention. As Mr. Brummell's valet observed of his master's neckcloths, 'this was one of our failures.'

I notice among recent publications 'The Religion of a Literary Man.' This ought to be very interesting, for hitherto men of letters have thought with Thomas Hood that 'faith and prayers are among the privatest of men's affairs.' It is said that Charles Dickens left behind him a record of his views upon spiritual things, but only intended

for the use of his children, and not for publication. Leigh Hunt has given us 'The Religion of the Heart,' a book that deserves to be better known, if only because it is typical of the faith of a great many cultured persons, and full of tenderness and charity. As to orthodoxy, I have never met with it in any man of letters, even though he may nominally have belonged to some established sect. It is quite curious how, as regards this class at least, the clergy misunderstand the causes of those various conditions of the human mind which they denounce under the common term of 'infidelity.' The days when the publication of the 'Evidences of Christianity' acted as a panacea for it are over; men's doubts are no longer historic doubts. 'Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief,' is as common a cry with many of us as ever, but except with a few scholars the historical question has comparatively slight interest, as compared with 'the riddle of the painful earth'—what seems amiss in the moral government of the world. Nor do the old stock phrases about the 'Origin of Evil' and the Immu-

table Laws of Order or of Nature produce much effect upon modern minds. The question that puzzles *them* is put further back, and inquires, Who is responsible for the laws? It seems to them impossible that omnipotence and benevolence in combination can permit the outrageous crimes and cruelties that go on every day in the world. The Powers of Evil do not seem to be, at all events for the present, subjugated to those of Good.

This, of course, has always troubled men's minds, but not so much as of late years, when the condition of other people has begun to awaken sympathy. It is quite extraordinary how callous even the most religious persons in the past have often been to the miseries of their fellow-creatures, both in this world and the next. They have, indeed, expressed their gratitude for being safe and sound themselves, but not without a feeling of complacency that others are not so fortunate. It is this callousness which has rendered the man of letters—impulsive and sensitive, soft-hearted yet easily moved to indignation, and charitable even

towards the sins he is not inclined to—unorthodox and something more. There may be in him a want of submissiveness to the Divine Will, and certainly of that unquestioning faith which is the comfort of so many souls, but there is no lack of human love and sympathy; and the man who loves his fellows, we are told, is very near to loving his Creator. At all events, the feeling I have described seems to me to have more or less pervaded the minds of almost all men of letters with whom I have conversed upon spiritual things. Because literary men are not as a rule churchgoers, they are often considered irreligious or as complete Gallios in the matter; but this is not at all my experience of them, and I have lived in their midst for nearly half a century.

A very distinguished member of the clergy used to say, with those half-shut eyes that always showed when his vein of humour was touched, and which caused it to be said of him that he never saw a happy moment: 'What strikes one as so queer is that belief in their particular dogma is made the

essential point of all sects, all of which save one—and perhaps even that—*must* be wrong.'

> Who damns every creed but his own
> Must look for a limited Heaven,
> And is like a man laying long odds
> When the long odds to him should be given.

It never seems to strike a theologian that his calculation is contrary to the doctrine of chances.

Before I end, let me say a word or two more about my much-maligned profession. That use is second nature is a common truism, yet few people, I imagine, have had it brought home to them more forcibly than myself. The question has often been put to me by those who have been good enough to take an interest in my writings: 'How do you manage, when you are ill or out of spirits, to write in the same unmistakably cheerful strain as usual?' I have often wondered myself, but without consciousness of the difficulty thus suggested. In times of trouble of many kinds, of severe physical ailments, of domestic bereavement, and even with death under the very roof, my pen, when I found myself at my desk, has turned to ordinary matters

with perfect facility, and treated them in its habitual airy manner. It may not be a good manner, but it has become my own, and misery itself has no power to make it sad. I write these very lines in the acutest pain from rheumatic gout in my gnarled fingers. Yet, after all, how slight is this moral victory of second nature compared with that she displays in physical matters! A man of middle age, with whose family I am acquainted, found one of his eyes affected, as he thought, by reading small print at night, and applied to a famous oculist for advice. He examined him very carefully, and presently inquired whether he found any inconvenience from the other eye—the right one.

'None whatever,' was the reply.

'Still,' said the oculist, drily, 'it is very important for you to preserve the sight of your left eye, inasmuch as you have never seen with the other since you were born.'

There was some inherent defect in the retina which forbade it, and yet up to the age of five-and-forty this man had not discovered that he had not

two eyes like other people. The fact is certain, though it has been justly remarked that he could never have winked with his left eye or he would have found himself in darkness.

As to the calling of Literature, which has been so much abused of late by some of its own followers, if I were to live twenty lives I would choose no other profession. It is the brightest and most genial of all of them, and, so far at least as my experience goes, the most free from jealousies and acrimonies. There are times, of course, when one would like to sentence a critic to be put to death 'to slow music,' but I have never felt inclined 'to put my knife'—unless it was the paper-knife—into any of my brother authors. They are very pleasant company, as kindly friends as can be found, and more inclined to look upon one's faults with tenderness than what are invidiously termed the respectable classes. The pursuit of letters makes us friends all over the globe, but it does not lead to fortune. Leisure in old age has been unhappily denied me. I suppose without vanity I may say that, as regards popularity, I

have been in the first dozen or so of story-tellers; but my gains have been small indeed when compared with anyone in the same position in any other calling. A judge and a bishop get 5,000*l.* a year and a retiring pension. I have been exceptionally fortunate in receiving such small prizes as literature has to offer, in the way of editorships and readerships, but the total income I have made by my pen has been but an average of 1,500*l.* a year for thirty-five working years. As compared with the gains of Law and Physic, and, of course, of Commerce, this is surely a very modest sum, though it has been earned in a most pleasant manner.

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